

2017 number 2



pentagram

Lectorium

Rosicrucianum

Immensely rich – infinite debt



pentagram

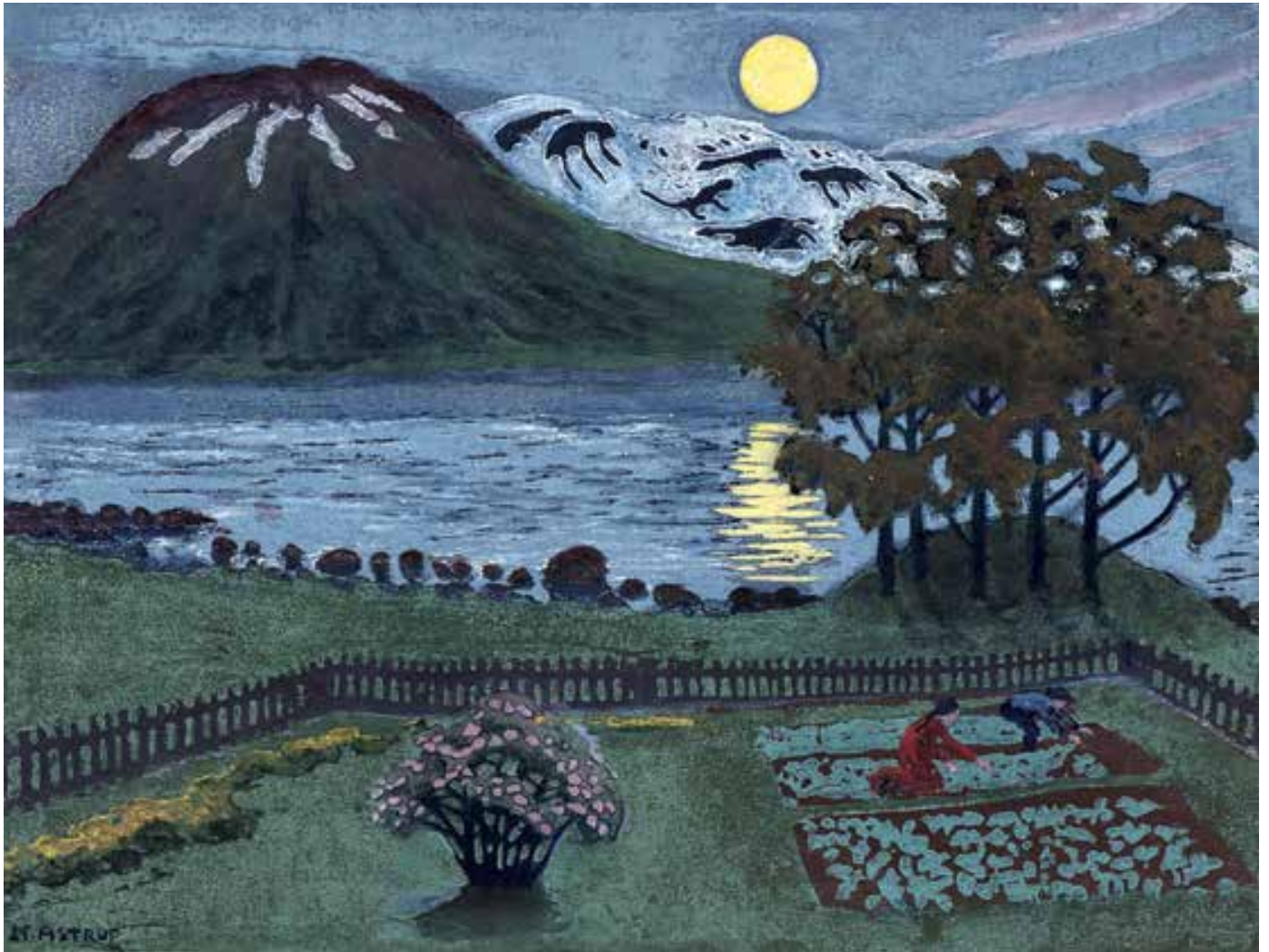
pentagram

According to the philosopher Kierkegaard love creates an infinite debt. Not to the one receiving it, but rather to the one who loves. That can't be true, we initially thought and so did everyone to whom we presented this dictum. He, who loves, gives his love to others. By receiving this love the others become somewhat indebted to him. That is how we would calculate it, right? No way, according to Kierkegaard it is exactly the other way around. He may write in a rather difficult way to follow, but after reading it again and again we finally understood what he meant. Love that creates a debt cannot be true love. This kind of love cannot to be paid back. Someone who gives love, does not become less through giving, and therefore does not need to receive anything in return to make up for a deficit. In fact, according to Kierkegaard, through the giving of love one's own debt becomes only greater, finally to become infinitely large. How is that possible? Well, this great thinker clarifies it in this way: love is a gift, a gift from the universe, or from the Above, or from the One, as he would say. Who has love, is immeasurably rich and for that he is infinitely indebted to the cosmos, the All-Being. Thus he does not need anything in return for his love, for in that love he is full of gratitude for that which enables him to love, God, or the One. Such a thought goes far beyond words.

Index



- 4 **The eye of Osiris**
A. Gadal
- 8 **Amor Intellectualis Dei – The reasonable Love for God**
- 16 **Master of the Stone**
- 24 **Healing**
- 26 **An outward sign of an inward mystery**
Power of the symbol
Essay
- 30 **What you are and the free will**
- 34 **Colours and words from the one source**
- 38 **Nicolas of Cusa**
Philosopher, jurist, prelate and diplomat
- 48 **Sol – Sun – Gold**
Symbol
- 50 **Memories of a better future**
Books
- 56 **Paradox**
Column
- 15 **World images [and 23, 55]**

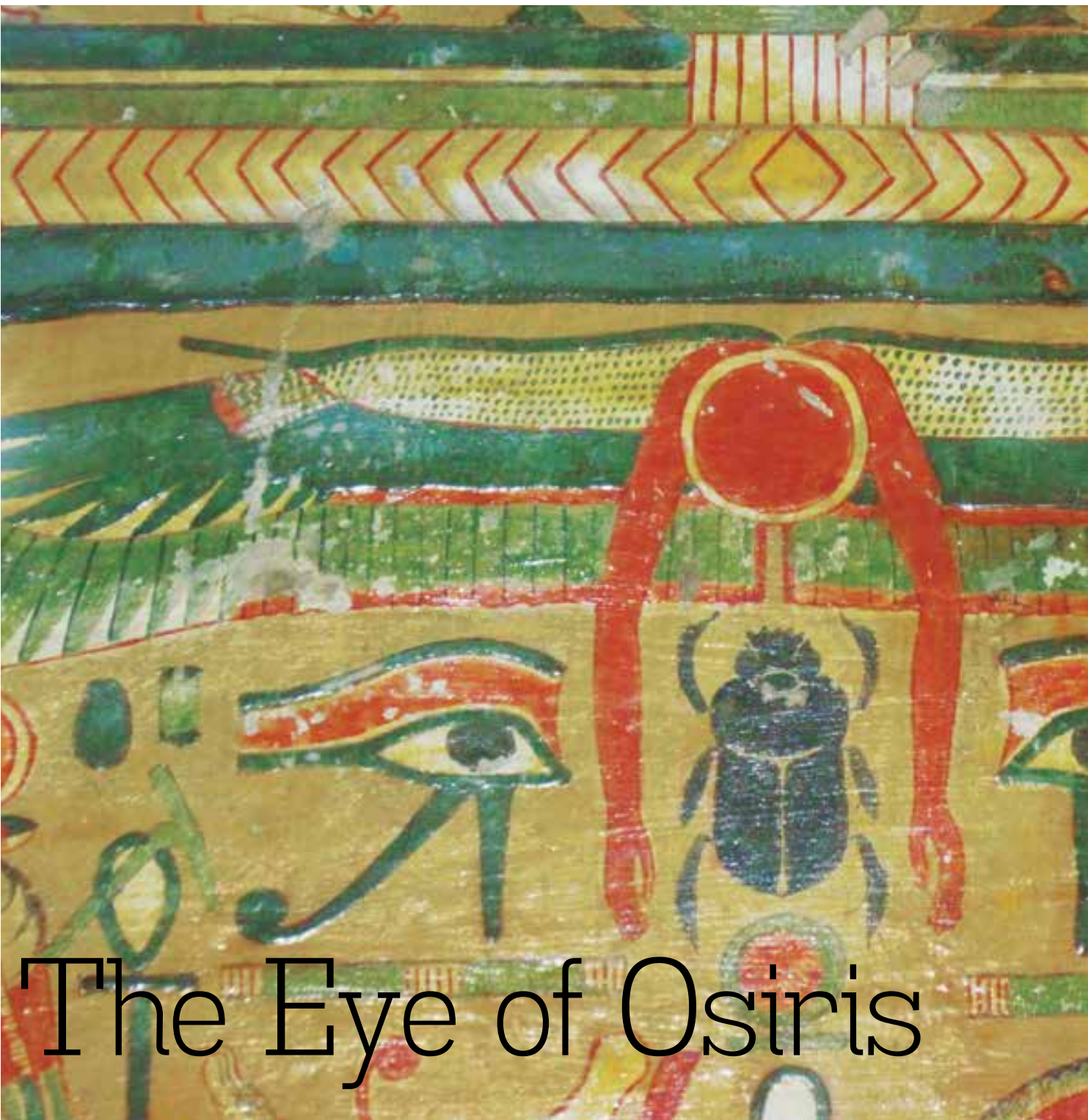


The Norwegian painter Nicolai Astrup was only 47 years old when he died in 1928. He is considered a Neo-romanticist, the latter-day followers of the romantic movement of the first half of the nineteenth century. It is said that the atmosphere he is able to call up is typical Norwegian, which is undoubtedly true. Yet something larger seems to come through, which is universal. For example, is the girl on the bench in the painting one of Astrup's daughters, having come down for a midnight celebration? Or is it a

fairy or sylphid, one of the quicksilver-like etheric beings from Norwegian folklore that are always present but dart off when a human being looks at them? All the visible life in Astrup's work vibrates in a mysterious way in an out-flowing of the One, of Tao, of Gnosis – ideas which at the beginning of the twentieth century were bon ton among the Symbolists and Fauvists. A vibration that also Astrup tried to catch in his work.

Above: 'The moon in May', 1908.

Cover: Nicolai Astrup, Living room at Sandalstrand, 1921



The Eye of Osiris



The Gnosis remains close to us, even when we are at the nadir of our life. The Gnosis is present, first as a fire in our conscience and then as a realization that brings the gift of a higher consciousness. Antonin Gadal brought this to our attention again and again by referring to old scriptures and bringing them to life. In this text he brings the Egyptian mysteries in connection with Moses and the story of Parsifal. This spiritual heritage was so far preserved only as a Dutch translation.

T

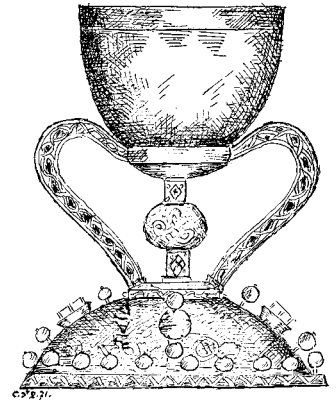
The Hierophants (the Egyptian priests) are feverishly agitated: Apophis, the monster that is dragon and snake in one and is the essence of evil, has appeared. Apophis attacks Osiris with unexpected force using his terrifying tail, his long and sharp talons and his fire-breathing snout that causes poisonous burns. He tears Osiris' body into numerous pieces and scatters them in all directions.

Isis, the gracious Goddess overcomes the bad influence of Apophis on mankind: she shatters its head. She then collects all the parts of Osiris' body except for his penis and reassembles them and thus brings him back to life. From now on Osiris is an anthropomorphic God, meaning that he is an ineffectual God, a shadow God, a black God.

The Hierophants are devastated. The law of the gracious trinity, the tri-unity of the three leaves is destroyed. The original unity does not exist anymore. The divine triangle cannot clarify anything anymore. "Osiris is a black God" they repeatedly tell their Neophytes. And he gets all the weaker because the gracious duality of Osiris-Isis can also not be understood anymore.

But everything must at one time return to the original unity. Osiris thus transforms into Horus. That is: into the son of Isis. And the lost reproductive organ becomes the Eye of Osiris. This Eye, this highest guardian of knowledge and true wisdom, will show the mortal human being the path of higher science. It is a path where evil can still often be encountered. Therefore the Eye of Osiris is also the eye of conscience.

The Eye of Osiris is the shining tower of perfection on the path to the Holy Grail



The Eye of Osiris unrelentingly separates the blameworthy human being from God. It inwardly divides the divine human being - the gracious two-fold being. Once separated from God, the unity can only be regained through God. Friends, hell is the separateness from God and the dreadful pangs of conscience!

This is what Origines said in this respect: Hell is the pangs of conscience brought on by the Eye of Osiris.

Joy

Suddenly there is great joy in the sanctuary: the triangle, the divine symbol has regained its grandeur in its entirety. The resurrection of Osiris restores again this triangle and in its centre the Eye of Osiris finds its place.

Later when Moses will have arrived at the Holy Land, the Hierophants will say: 'Osiris is a black God, but the Eye of Osiris will be placed in Moses' cradle. He, who was saved by the water will become the heir of the mysteries; and thus he will become the heir of the universal waters of the Druids! He will be saved by the Living water!'

What an all-embracing interpretation of the highest knowledge!

The sacred barque, the boat of Isis will

also be the boat of Moses. It is the ark with the four animals, the four portrayals of the Sphinx.

The Eye of Osiris is the shining tower of perfection on the path to the Holy Grail, the sanctification in Christ: It is the four-fold square that we never want to lose sight off.

1. God created the human being after his image. He created him as man and woman.
2. Man and woman were given to each other as companions. God commanded them to be of a unity.
3. and 4. The God of Love gave them two sons, Cain and Abel. But what a curse when Cain killed Abel.

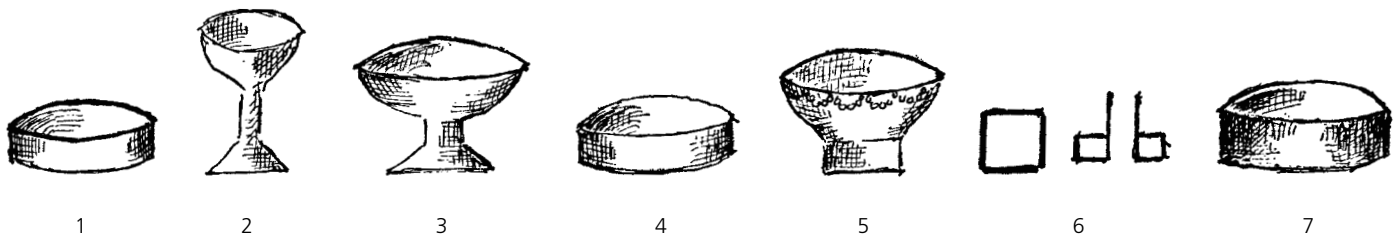
Only Three remain of the Four. The path is blocked and the old earth is soaked by Abel's blood!

And so we will understand why on the quest for the Holy Grail only Galahad sees the Grail and takes it in his hands. Parsifal, however, who fails on his path to perfection, does not receive it.

Therefore Parsifal turns to the sage Trevizent, the master of high sciences who stands for the Eye of Osiris. Parsifal is unknowing and does not understand! Trevizent says to him: "You forgot to ask, forgot to consider it.... You have seen the Grail, but you were ignorant towards its virtues and its wisdom."

And he continues: "You did not become humble, you remained proud. Full of envy and discouragement you even doubted the Holy Grail. Be humble and meek. To acquire the Gnosis you have to be worthy of it. Remember the stigma that the earth received because of Cain. It will have to be erased."

The same was later incessantly repeated by Loup de Foix, the Parfait of Bethlehem and the church of Ussat. "We" always have to surrender to the Highest before we may enter his temple!"



1. Egyptian Chaldean Grail (in the colors night blue and green), 2. Grail of the Hierophants, 3. Grail of the Gnostics, 4. Grail of the Christ (earthenware), 5. Azemladour, embellished with 12 gemstones and pearls, the symbol of wisdom and purity, 6. Grail of the Templars, 7. Grail of the Cathars by Robert de Boron

Left: The Holy Grail from Valencia with inscription in Arabic: "He, who brings the Light". At this time the Saracens had great influence on Spain

Humble

To reflect on the deep meaning of the Pentagram of Bethlehem we have to be humble and surrender ourselves to free ourselves of the 'garment' or better, the 'shell' that keeps us imprisoned.

Cain, the human being that is separated from God and who is cast away from God for his misdeed, let him always gaze at the Eye of Osiris.

He will always raise barriers, fortifications, stone walls and even steel walls to hide himself. All his efforts will be in vain! The Eye is always with him. It unceasingly gazes at him to show him the atrocity of his deed. This is the hell of the pangs of conscience; the incurable evil that therefore leads to the grave. What a terrible inner suffering!

At this point I urge you to consider deeply the following words that will convince you of the truth:

Cain tried to escape the Eye. But the Eye was in the grave and gazed at Cain!

In this way the Gnosis will be close to us even at the nadir of our life. Cain, the fiery, -the seeker cannot flee from the Gnosis. The Gnosis is with him because of the Eye of Osiris that is within him. First as a fire of conscience, but in the end after a path through grievance and misery, he will gain true knowledge.

Then the third Eye, - the Gnosis, - the higher consciousness will be given to him.

The higher science, kept secret by the Hierophants, had besides the Eye of Osiris other favored symbols. Wisdom, the high Gnosis, had three:

- The gate with the two-winged square-shaped door, symbol for the universal equilibrium. $4+4=8$, a sacred number.
- The Caduceus with the two snakes. This represented originally the Gnosis or Wisdom. On the horizontal line it later became the symbol of Medicine.
- The cross with two horizontal beams. It is the Tri-unity that represents the revelation of the providence, the revelation of God in this nature order through Christ.

This cross is the great sign of the Hierophants, of the High priests. It is a symbol of eternity, just as the circle is. It is an eightfold priestly staff, which is at the same time threefold. It is the hierarchic double cross of the staff of the High priests.

The barque of Isis, retained by Moses, is the basis of the cross of the Grandmaster. This is the barque of the candidate, the esoteric sign of all our brothers and sisters of the old Brotherhood!

Godfrey of Bouillon chose the double cross as coat of arms for his kingdom in Jerusalem. We find it again in our consecrated centers. And it also became the cross of Lorraine.

Can you understand what 8000 years of history of the universal knowledge means to us?

Especially in this present time, where the Gnosis touches the entire world and urges it to a reaction. The barque of Isis, retained by Moses, is at the same time the basis of the cross of our Grandmaster. It is the barque that leads the candidate to the inner kingdom.

Cross and barque form our spiritual heritage. We will keep them in our hearts! ★

Amor Intellectualis Dei

The excellent philosopher Benedict Spinoza distinguishes three kinds of knowledge in his philosophy. In his life-course, called the 'Ethics', he describes:

1st: Knowledge derived from sensory impressions that show little or no coherence between them;

2nd: Reasonable knowledge. Through Reason (or mind) which the sensory perceptions are organized and made into a coherent whole. The contradictions and characteristic of sensory life are thus distinguished and held apart. By this process develops the knowledge that Spinoza indicated as an both an adequate understanding or true knowledge of the properties of things;

3rd: Intuitive knowledge, the highest form of knowledge by which the properties of things are properly derived and understood in the necessary connection of the one indivisible Nature.

The opposites, the imaginable largest and the least imaginable, fall together. This third form is the highest form of knowledge because there is no division or contradiction.

Let us not confuse this form of knowledge with the term 'synthesis', which the philosopher Hegel uses in his 'dialectics'. There thesis and antithesis lead to synthesis, and thus, ever higher, an ever more perfect humanity evolves into the perfection of life and fulfillment. Thus, In Hegel's philosophy, there is an evolution of the natural man within the framework of the dialectic life. But in Spinoza's work, the third form of knowledge is transcendent, beyond the dialectic.

This third form of knowledge is God, the Gnosis, the highest object of Knowledge, the 'Absolute' where there is no contradiction. God is the 'Hidden One'. He is inconceivable for dialectical consciousness, which is made up of contradictions, a tangled blend of good and evil.

Spinoza called this third form of knowledge 'The Reasonable Love for God', the 'Amor Intellectualis Dei'.

It is no longer us who, if we may say so, think of things, but rather, the things are perceived in us by a new revelatory spiritual principle, the Logos.

The three forms of knowledge correspond to three types of men: the early Gnostics spoke of the 'hylic' man, the 'psychic' man and the 'pneumatic' man.

The reasonable Love for God

Gnosis and Life cannot be separated: Faith and Life, inner knowing, or true Knowledge, and Life, are one. But inner knowledge, or Gnosis, does not come naturally- it is born out of necessity and maturity-of-life.



Connectedness

However, we must be mindful of the fact that the three forms of knowledge are interconnected within us: we may carry these three forms of knowledge in us simultaneously.

There is first: the physical, materialistically oriented man; secondly, the person who, on the basis of a multitude of experiences, becomes sensitive to the soul and tries to follow her laws; and thirdly, the spirit-soul-man in which the new soul connects permanently with God, with the light-field of the Gnosis.

This last form of Knowledge can also be called Gnosis.

This intuitive Knowledge originates in the heart and radiates from the heart. It is the blossoming Rose of the heart which, through your search, your desire for real Life, for Truth and Unity, can communicate her strength, her pure power and her grace.

In the heart is the spirit-spark atom. Here lies all the spiritual potential that, as atomic power, can start its transmuting and transfiguring activity, if there is openness and receptiveness. That receptiveness will be present when a person has gone through, experienced, and principally turned away from, the unsatisfactoriness and even the bitterness of mundane life in this transitory world.

Openness, receptivity, understanding and insight are the necessary and indispensable factors.

An intense activity must also be developed so that the powerful gnostic radiation power can develop and be applied in its entirety. The whole being is involved: the consciousness, the soul and the physical.

The Reasonable Love for God is therefore that involvement of man, in which he knows that he is connected with his entire being and in a lasting alignment

with the high order and lawfulness of the Gnosis.

It is not enough to think only about or watch or study the possible 'interesting' spiritual or historical aspects of the Gnosis. Full involvement is required here, to enable the encounter between two completely opposing worlds, between two opposing power and radiation activities of two different natures, and to make that encounter real.

To express it metaphorically, this is the meeting between 'day' and 'night' - the night in which everything seems entangled, where there are no clear images, where everything is blurred, confused, entangled, and there is nobody who knows the Way, or can give you advice - and the 'day', on the other hand, which is bright, in which everything is clear, transparent, ready and positive.

Both day and night are present in humans. This inevitably involves a strong inner conflict and an inner struggle that must be fought. It is clear, however, that no human being is directly prepared for that purpose. After all, he was born and raised in the nature of 'night' - a nature in which everything shows itself in opposites, in division and separation, in time and space. While the forces of the Gnosis, on the other hand, are timeless, undivided, without contradiction; ineffable and true.

So the Gnosis starts her graceful activity in the cave of Bethlehem, where the Star of the new-born Soul shows in the respiration-field of a yearning human. By this is meant that the liberating Light, the True and the Good, is therefore born, and will develop its activity, in a still dark world. That has to be taken into account, otherwise you may well be deceiving yourself. The road that now opens up before us, this Via Dolorosa, leads to Golgotha (which literally means 'skull') where the

Inner knowledge or Gnosis does not come naturally, but is born out of necessity and a maturity of life

Light of the heart encountered on the path of the cross - which we can call in this connection the path of the rosy cross - will break through into the head-sanctuary.

The cross of nature is transformed into the cross of Light in which the Light, the rose, the born-again soul, flourishes in unspeakable beauty. The inflow of the Gnosis into the consciousness is an intense grace.

Gnosis and Life cannot be separated: Faith and Life, Inner knowing, or True Knowledge, and Life, are one.

But inner knowledge or Gnosis does not come naturally- it is born out of necessity and a maturity-of-life. Theoretical knowledge belongs to the 'night', the ignorance, among which all occult, esoteric and mystical knowledge.

Gnosis is a necessity in the plan-of-life of the Logos. Theory, on the other hand, has no foundation whatsoever.

The Logos Plan is all that is Necessary and bears the 'Only-Good' in itself.

Life in the sense of the Gnosis fulfills the Logos development plan out of necessity! Therefore, the ignorant person does exist, but he does not really live – rather, he is being lived.

Gnosis, the True and the Good, the third form of Knowledge, becomes active, real, as an active power in the prepared and receptive mind.

But the beginning must be conquered, willed into being, in dialectical life, in the power of the Rose.

Gnosis, the Amor Intellectualis Dei, therefore means recognition and a breaking down of many barriers and obstacles: a turmoil of confusion, entanglement, obscuration of insight, all the characteristics of 'the night'.

These include the negative emotional thought patterns that are inherent to the natural personality: gloominess, depression, jealousy, rivalry, nihilism, revenge, hate, reluctance, criticism, pessimism, and so on.

The third type of 'knowing' person will, in his or her life, have an inner happiness and equanimity which is disrupted by nothing, because he is focused on the fulfillment of the Logos Plan, which includes all and everything.

Everything in this Plan is logical and necessary, every phenomenon is propelled to 'creation', that is, to the development of the immanent plan; it is the effective Power of eternity in time.

Knowing ourselves as separate existences indicates that we are prisoners of our time-based perceptions.

These lead to a confused and partial knowledge, which is the first kind of knowledge, and the living state that corresponds to it is essentially characterized by conflicts and divisions.

The pure Reason strives for eternal totality. However, desire for and focus on the sensory life continue, as long as the individual sees things temporarily and partially, as long as consciousness remains 'nightly'.

The happiness and joy of human beings lie in the sight of the necessity of things through the necessity of divine Nature; that is, when one observes things in the light of eternity, or God in Nature, yes, in Everything.

The poet, the artist, the musician, the soul-sensitive ones, they try to shape this 'necessity', written in and through the world-ether, in sound, colour, rhythm, relationship.

The scientist seeks the essence and definition of these laws in formulas, and to be 'master of nature'.

Nevertheless, we find that the fullness of the 'Amor Intellectualis Dei' is formless, not perceptible to the sensory human being.

It manifests itself only in the completely silent nous, the still mind. Hermes summarizes this as follows: 'What is in the Spirit can only be perceived by the spirit-eye. Therefore, O soul, seek real understanding of the existence of things and understand their essence, but ignore their quantity and quality. The existence of things and their essence is simple, and the soul can understand this immediately without a mediator, but their quality and quantity are multiplied and bounded by space and time'.

What is seen in space-time as an infinite chain of cause and effect is, from the point of view of eternity, the eternal and unchangeable, thus necessarily the will of God.

The illusion that, in time, freedom could maybe exist, is, in this light, replaced by the certainty that freedom beyond time is possible!

In this knowledge, through this knowledge, the soul is prepared to connect with the spiritual Light of the World Soul that penetrates and encompasses the universe and all creatures.

The golden wedding garment is now woven.

We have seen that this Light is primarily known in the heart, in which lies the core of pure consciousness, of the Gnosis. We have discussed three forms of knowledge. It is, therefore, good to establish that there are no separations between these three forms. Nothing like: first this and then that. All the forms of knowledge, including the one seen by Spinoza as the 'highest' form, the 'Amor Intellectualis Dei', all exist within us. It is good to be aware of this.

The first form of knowledge we discussed consists of the ideas and opinions and representations obtained from 'hear sayings', the information derived from random and inconsistent sensory impressions.

It is present, but it is not an active self-existing element in our consciousness; the contrary is true. It is a passive source of prejudices, opinions and assumptions. By it, the bright, clear and transparent 'Light of the Day', the condition of living for the growth of the soul, is obscured and obstructed. This first form of knowledge is widespread, and is completely coincidental and interdependent, a closed and limited system. It is the 'wisdom' of which Paul in the Bible observes that it is 'as a foolishness with God'.

It is different with the knowledge of the second kind, the reasonable knowledge. This Knowledge is a dynamic, ever-expanding, positive and ever-active, -an ever flowing source of inner wealth.

This second type of knowledge is gained, as we noted before, by sorting and estab-



'THE PURPOSE OF THE STATE IS FREEDOM'

In 2008, the artist Nicolas Dings, in an inimitable manner, gave the man Spinoza a new contemporary mantle. His sculpture is a trinity: a stage, one Icosahedron and a figure, that are all inextricably linked. Just as Newton, Galileo and Kepler wanted to understand the universe in new laws, Spinoza in his 'Ethics' wanted to embrace and articulate the spiritual universe.

The bronze figure of the philosopher is wrapped in a cloak, which has attributes that refer to his thinking about tolerance, freedom of religion and freedom of expression, while also foretelling of the current pluriform society. Spinoza was after all a son of immigrants. The cloak is adorned with birds and flowers and roses applied to the pleats, featuring universal diversity. The rose, the universal metaphor for beauty, is depicted on Spinoza's seal ring. The ring is also engraved with the word 'caute', which means 'careful'. For the rose of beauty also has thorns- Spinoza literally also means thorn!

The philosopher's thinking is represented by a stone Icosahedron (not visible in the picture), a mathematical form of twenty triangles, twelve vertices and thirty edges. The Icosahedron is made of cut granite and thus refers to his profession: lens sharpener.

On the side of the stage is Spinoza's name and the quote: 'The purpose of the state is freedom'.



lishing, on the basis of reason, all the sensory information, ideas and information, into a true order, a coherent whole.

Looking closer at the knowledge of the first kind, it is important to understand and see through its characteristics, namely the arbitrary ideas, opinions, assumptions, the illusions and imaginations. Think of 'wishful thinking', in which we tend to see what we want to see, and also to believe it and to assume it to be true, thus losing our sober perspective. In this same way we also have the tendency to think that our 'reality', our 'view', and our 'wisdom' could be applicable to everyone and everything.

These things drag us along; they form a mental and emotional imprisonment, within the structures of arbitrariness and of the 'night'. They are also the hidden inner sources of anger, criticism, bitterness, aggression, annoyance, fear of violence and struggle, waiting to be triggered. Within this knowledge realm, there is no order 'beyond' to discover, just arbitrariness, and here humanity is trapped and driven, like mice in a treadmill: they are 'lived' rather than 'living'.

Plato spoke in this regard: 'When the night extends over things, the eyes seem to have lost their perception; when the soul is aimed at what lies in the half-darkness (what develops and passes) then it has no knowledge but only opinions (doxa). She becomes sighted (taken in by appearance), and seems to be deprived of all reason'.

The knowledge of the second kind, Reasonable Knowledge, however, is acquired by clear perception - there are no preconceived ideas, opinions, no reflections, or concepts that have been thought in advance. It is seeing things as they really are.

Krishnamurti denoted this knowledge as 'choiceless perceiving'. Through this, we

read the Book of Nature, and breathe in the clear skies in which the world soul pours out her graceful and True melodies. However, we know that the conditioning of consciousness colours our observations, making them false, not clear; they will cloud your consciousness and delude and fool you without a guideline, in a labyrinth of confusion and contradiction. How can a man shine his Light if he is confused? Nevertheless, doing this, holding this 'choiceless awareness', without judgement, we may clean ourselves of the tarnish, the encrusted calcified layers of delusion and false identification that have built up and cleaved to the soul.

The third kind of knowledge, Intuitive Knowledge, is that Knowledge, the Gnosis, which we cannot grasp intellectually, bright, clear, and in no way wrong in any circumstances. It is the knowledge that is not rational, and so does not need to be explained intellectually; its truth is immediately understood. It is the innermost Intellectual Love for God

From the heart then, the glow of this true knowledge rises and ignites the Lights of the seven candlesticks in the head-sanctuary. This light radiates, in response to the powerful touch of the World Soul. This light, which is now ignited, is the winning light of the Christ.

To the extent that man understands what this Light accomplishes in our dark world, to that extent he will endeavour to cleanse the unwise knowledge that maintains the darkness. ★





Master of the Stone

My friend . . .

If you read this you have found my report; my report on a question that changed my life completely: "What is the world asking of you?"

The sun has just gone down and a beautiful red-purple colour illuminates the clouds high in the sky. The terrain is rocky with red coloured earth around long blades of grass and the occasional shrub. Behind me are the hills that I have been travelling through today. I stop and look around. It is quiet and breathtakingly beautiful. I am alone in this vast landscape. Nobody comes here. Actually I should continue to walk but the tiredness in my legs and the beauty of the sunset make me yearn for a nice spot to sit and just look around me and rest. Yes, over there, that high rock of about three meters high, that is a beautiful place.

Well . . . here I am.

Isn't it crazy how one decision can change your life like this... I take my backpack off my shoulders and put it down next to me. I take a sip of lukewarm water. Somewhere in the air a little bird warbles. It is becoming dark remarkably fast and - as I continue walking - I notice that I am beginning to get a bit worried about how long I still will have to walk through this vast plain. I had thought that the city would be closer to the hills. I think I'd

better go and look for a place to sleep and curl up in my sleeping bag which is still tied under my backpack ...

I get up and look around me again.

Hey, is that a light over there?

In the falling darkness I now see slightly to my right some little pinpricks of light becoming increasingly clearer, marking the outline of a city. Tomorrow I'll be there, the thought flashes through me; tomorrow is the big day, the day to leave behind me the life I have led up till now. And I do not even know if I have the courage for it.

J. van Rijckenborgh:

"It is now probably clear to you that there are two atmospheric fields. Not one here and another elsewhere, but existentially present at the same time, just as there are equally two electromagnetic fields existentially present. One state typifies the state of fall and grace, the state of patience and of helpfulness. The other state expresses absoluteness and divinity.

Both conditions are present, at the same time, in the same space, here and now. One cannot designate where the sea of divine fullness-of-life is not present. The Kingdom of God and its life atmosphere is nearer than hands and feet, yes, it is within you. And the Great Ones who testify of this divine fullness-of-life say to us: "Behold, I am with you

A TRAVELOGUE AND A DIALOGUE

always, unto the end of your world! He is among you whom you do not know. The living water is there, and you can drink freely. If you want to drink this water, if you want to live in that other atmosphere, you will have to leave this incidental world. Go, leave behind you all that you have and follow me!”

Do you know how I got here?

Last week I sat slumped listening in class to our mentor who had quite a speech about how important it was to make the right choice in the courses we will have to choose, because they determine your future, and things like that

You should know that I had fallen into a kind of stupor. You’ve probably had the same experience: it was hot that day and for one reason or another the sounds seemed to come from ever further away. I reclined a little further in my seat and my thoughts wandered along paths of the things the mentor said. I’m almost sure I would have fallen asleep if I had closed my eyes.

Sound bites like: “Important!” ... My dreamy head was not able to cope. “Choice!” ... Pfff, I thought.”Your future depends on it!” ...

I see the sweat on the forehead of our mentor slowly sliding down and see his mouth moving, but at the same time everything beats me... And crazily enough, that was the moment when a question arose in my mind that grabbed me by the throat as it were: What is the world asking of me?

Suddenly I saw myself as from a distance, suspended in the classroom, while the mentor vainly tried to keep his dull audience interested. A shock went through me. What did I actually do each day? And what would I do in the future?

What does the world demand from me?

That I go to school?

That I’m nice and polite?

That I have a smartphone just like everyone else?

That I play sports and have a birthday party every year?

That I save money and clean up my room?

That I eat with a knife and fork and only get dessert when my plate is empty?

And what does the world demand of me when I’m older?

That I go to work from 9 to 5?

That I’ll buy a house and neatly mow the lawn?

That I go to important meetings?

That I know what is happening in the world and that I am pro or anti things?

That I am successful?

Possibly a thousand options were crossing my mind that afternoon of what might be about to happen in the world around me. But I only asked myself even more seriously: is this what the world wants from me? I mean, really?

Many things I do are pastimes, more or less fun, exciting or boring. But they all feel like pastimes. As if I do things, waiting for something real, for something essential.

And then, then I started thinking, really thinking ...

J. van Rijckenborgh:

However, to be able to leave the prison of your own occasional world, you have to become a Master of the Stone. You must lay the foundation stone for a new temple construction. But in order to be a master, you must first become a pupil, an apprentice temple builder! Have you, singled out because of your own experience, learned the nature of your natural prison, and did you discover that this world is also a place of grace? For the Gnosis does not desire your destruction; It wants to help you. Therefore, there is a Universal Brotherhood, which bridges the two life atmospheres. It brings you something of the original living water, in different states, adapted to your state-of-being. The

Is this what
the world
wants
from me? I
mean, really?

.....

full jump across you cannot make and you do not need to make. There are brothers and sisters who help you forward at every step you would want to take, and who place your foot on the bridge which leads from your current state to the other side. Why then would there be anxiety and fear? There is no one who forces you to take a step that you are not able to. None of the Brothers want to force you. Stay on the stone on which you are standing, and if you have power for the next step you will be helped. That is why it is said: "Come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Seek and you shall find; knock and the door shall be opened unto you." There is only one condition to the Path: it is expected of you, to become an apprentice temple builder. Then you will undoubtedly one day be a Master of the Stone.

The sizzling heat makes the air vibrate above the ground.

When I got up this morning, it had been so cold that I had woken me up. The town, my final goal, fortunately is already closer and visible. Just now I need to persevere, always taking the next step, and then I will be there tonight.

You might be asking yourself what I'm doing here, and why I'm exhausting myself to reach that city. I should tell you: this city has something that attracts me irresistibly.

You will not believe me but the most important thing for me now is: a bridge. Along the town runs a canyon, a gap of more than 1,400 meters deep, created by millions of years of river erosion, that seeks its way deep down, like a blue ribbon. The inhabitants of this city once built the craziest bridge ever across the canyon.

It is a bridge you can only cross over in one direction.

It is built of many small silver coloured metal strips, which are joined together with small screws and bolts.

It's a portent, a symbol. The inhabitants



have constructed the bridge as a sign that you are leaving the civilized world behind when you leave the town and travel into the plains behind the canyon. It is also a tilting bridge with a contra weight - so that it is exactly balanced when it is open.

But if you put your foot on the bridge it literally collapses, step by step until it touches the ground when you reach the other side.

Step off the bridge and it bounces back again, waiting for the next person to cross. The name of this bridge is: The bridge of no return.

You can only cross this bridge if you are sure you want to leave the old behind and squarely meet the unknown.

Do you know the feeling that you actually never really feel at home anywhere?

Whatever the world seems to ask of me, I

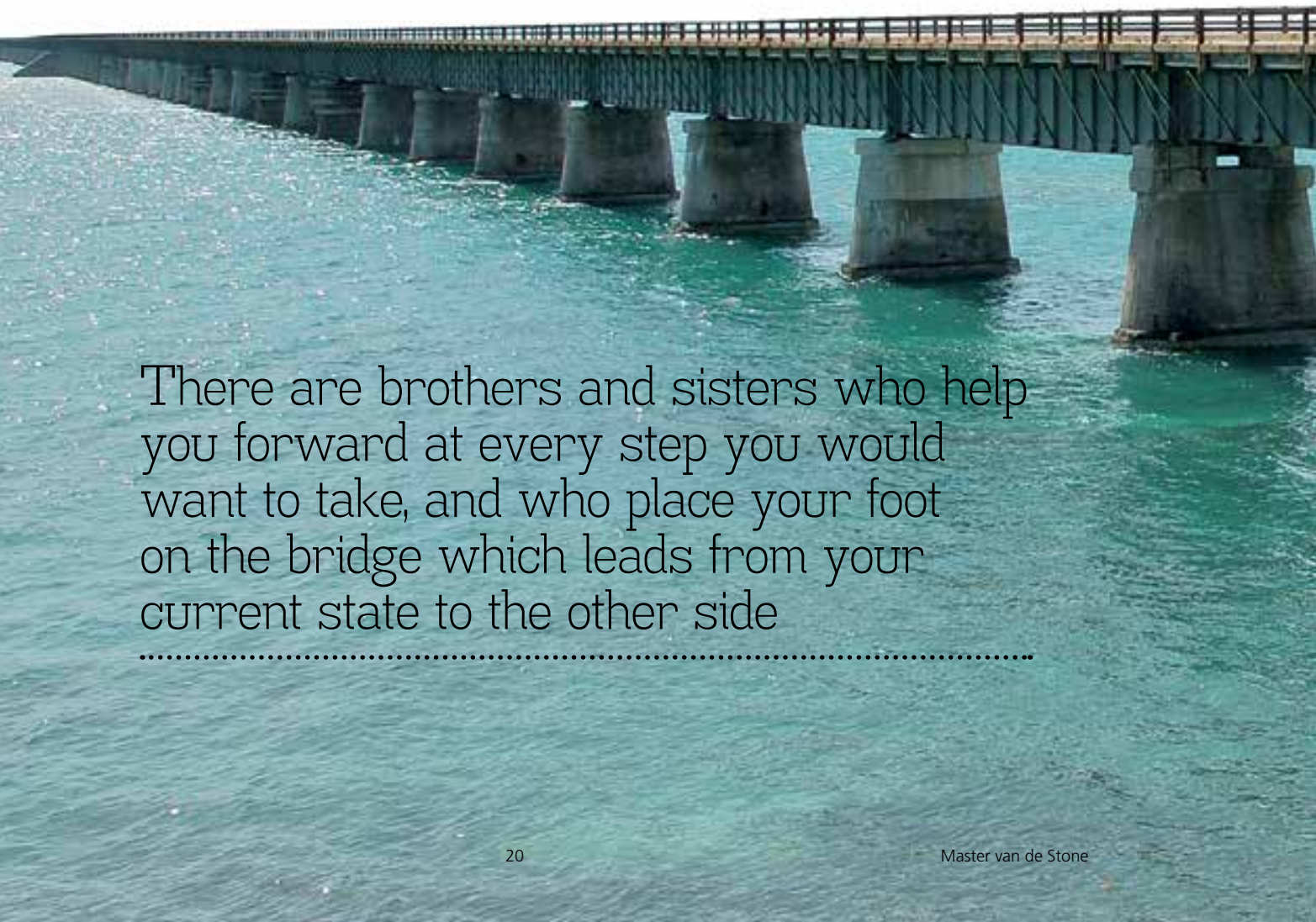
IGNIS – the original hydrogen,
FLAMMA – the oxygen of divine
reality,
MATERIA – the dual power of fulfillment,
MATER – the moulding, the original
carbon.

never get the feeling: “yes, that’s it, that is really a part of me.” Of course I also have fun with my friends and in our house I have a nice room of my own.
Might it just be me? Am I a strange bird who is not satisfied with the life around me?
What does the world want from me?
If I let my intuition speak, I definitely think the world needs something from me. It asks me to do things differently, to go new paths in my own special way. If I make it easy for myself I only see two possibilities: either I enter into the life that I see around me, or I follow my heart and proceed into a life that focuses on something totally different.
I try to imagine that I’m old and am

looking back on my life; what would I like to see? What kind of tone would I like to bring to the music of my life? What would be really important to me? All those things that I see adults doing? They sometimes seem to be so lost!
And so I knew. I mean, I really knew what I wanted to do with my life.
I would do it differently. I want to leave the ordinary behind me. I took the old rucksack from my father’s attic. What do you need for the wilderness, how much can you carry? I was going on foot, not by train or bus, but through the wilderness and then into that city to test my decision on the scariest bridge there is. A bridge without return across a gap that cannot be crossed in any other way.

There are brothers and sisters who help you forward at every step you would want to take, and who place your foot on the bridge which leads from your current state to the other side

.....



J. van Rijckenborgh:

What does this mean: to be an apprentice temple builder? It means that you are going to lay the foundation stone for a new temple construction, and that you will have to hew that first stone in the right way. May we teach you how to do this? Well then, take a piece of hard stone, i.e., place yourself before the harsh reality of basalt of your dialectic aimless existence. You then place yourself in front of this reality with the sharp chisel of your right focus and unwavering determination and carve into it with all your strength the stylized rose of the Cosmic Septenary. This stylized rose is from now on as a window in your prison, through which you are able to look outside. Through this rose Goethe's Faust gazed. Through this rose Dante observed the Paradiso. Through this rose the apprentice temple builder looks with a clear eye. Through this

window the apprentice breaks and chisels and hews the cross. He hews his Path, his way to liberation. In this sign he will overcome, just like Christian Rosycross."

I walk through the city. Occasionally people follow me with their eyes which is only natural. When you have been crossing the jungle for a week you will look a bit haggard. I grin a bit. My shoes are grey with a thick layer of dust. There are stains on my trousers and my hair is certainly a mess. Above a few buildings I see the first glimpse of the bridge. The evening sun shimmers on a silver structure. I turn a corner. In front of me there is a straight road with no houses which opens onto a small round

The beginning of the
Seven Mile Bridge,
Key West, Florida



piazza. At the edge of the piazza the bridge rises high.

Only now I realize how high it is, because I have to bend my neck all the way to see its top, pointing up high like a finger.

Behind me I hear shuffling of feet. About a dozen people have stopped and are standing there watching me. "What do you intend to do?" A man asks. "Why are you looking at that bridge? You're not going to tell me you want to cross it?" I nod and walk towards the piazza. "You know that there is no return, you know that?" cries the man following me. It's so strange to be here at last. After all the things I've been thinking, after my decision, after my journey through the wilderness I can now actually touch the iron bridge.

I pick up my pen and write the final necessary lines in my report. They are not at the bottom but at the top:

"my friend . . ."

I fold the sheets, put them in an envelope and slide it between the stones under the bridge. So that anyone can find it and read.

J. van Rijckenborgh:

Then he places his stone before the Gnosis and, while continuing on the path of self-dissolving, bringing his old world to an end, he evokes, with the sharp edge of his weapon, the four Holy Foods: IGNIS- the original hydrogen,

FLAMMA- the oxygen of divine reality,

MATERIA - the dual power of fulfilment,

MATER - the moulding, the original carbon.

And then he puts his stone in the niche of realization, in the upper room of the master builders.

What do you think will happen now?

The new atmosphere, the ancient spirit fire, seizes the pilgrim and descends on him, now that he, as an old picture portrays it, breaks through with his head and his staff through the sphere of dialectic illusion and beholds the reality of the stylized rose;

now no more just a symbol but an inner possession, opening up before him as a reality. His system becomes a radioactive field of the Brotherhood. He enters the original magnetic field. By laying the foundation stone the flames of the spiritual fire are ignited and the apprentice temple builder becomes Master of the Stone."

My time has come.

Now I'm going to prove to myself that my decision is genuine. Carefully I put my left foot on the first angled piece of the bridge towering high above me. For a moment, nothing happens. Then a shudder vibrates through the bridge and it tilts very, very slightly forward. Now I can take my right foot off the stones and stand fully on the bridge. And again the bridge bends down a little. The bridge is designed in such a way that you literally realize with every step what you're doing. You have to put in an effort for each step - it is not automatically done. Only when you take a step will the bridge tilt further down. Deep, deep below me I see the blue of the river at the bottom of the gorge. For a moment my stomach seems to squirm and my legs seem to change into limp rubber.

But my hands are still strong, I grab the railing and move another step forward, and the limp feeling disappears. You see, you just have to keep on going. Then suddenly I see the other side that was hidden from sight all the time by the bridge.

I stand on the uttermost edge of the bridge. If I take one more step it will swing up behind me, waiting for a next person to cross. My desire is for freedom, truth, love, friendship, and to help - and I take the step. ★

All quotations are from the book

"The Coming New Man' part I, chapter XI

"The rose of the sevenfold manifestation of God" by J. van Rijckenborgh



"Sky Ladder," a work of fire-art by Cai Guo-Qiang, lit on the 15th of June in the harbour of the island Huiyu, Quanzhou, Fujian (Japan). The artist thus symbolizes the connection between the Earth and the Universe.





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Healing

I woke up
from a congested dream,
returned to myself,
and in my hands,
an ordinary earthen pot
from which a frail stem
with a small bud
seemed to reach out to me.

I wanted to move the untimely gift
immediately to the queue
of the multitude clamouring for my attention
but it was so insistent, so intrusive,
like a self-explanatory answer to my own question,
that I could not bring myself
to get rid of it. On the contrary,
it was a presence
that could not be ignored,
inconvenient or not.
A freshness that breathed through me
with a joy I could barely contain,
a joy which was more than the sum of all rejoicing
that had ever been my share.
A request- and at the same time an offer
without any space for yes or no.

But the world demands its rights,
and often more than is its due.
And I followed meekly, many times,
enchanted by the tinsel.
But the call rustled again,
barely audible;
a beneficial pain
in the womb of my mind.
But every time I return
to the inner sanctuary,
reluctantly, freed,
with bated breath.
And every time I find
the door wide open
and a warm glow radiates towards me
from a common earthen pot ...
Like a never broken: Welcome!

I kneel before the bud,
that has been entrusted to me for so long.
The wonder flower will eventually break its fetters
although there is no 'where' and no 'when'.
Someday I shall know... ★

An outward sign of an inward mystery



As a human being, you spend a lot of your time thinking. There are three major energy streams in you; the head as the centre of thinking, the heart as the centre of feeling, and the abdomen from where actions originate. When in a conscious state, you spend most of your time thinking, or so it seems. It is often a continuous and compelling process. But isn't it just thoughts that pass by?

Because of the conviction that you are having all these thoughts, the thoughts become a private property and communicating with others soon becomes a perilous undertaking. Especially as we assume that what we think is really true. This conviction is inherent with having thoughts and being a thinker. Because everyone else thinks and thus has other “truths”, communication sometimes seems to be a secret negotiation with the aim to make your own truths acceptable to others, to convince each other in a battle of attack and defence. But just imagine what it would be like to communicate only on the basis of your heart. How would you do that? Just radiate wordlessly your deep feelings or your profound sense of being? Wouldn't it then be like speaking of ‘my feelings and your feelings’ and ‘I feel like this and you feel it differently’? In this regard a lot of communication problems relate to the three streams of your thinking, feeling and acting. And therefore they cannot be resolved within the conditioning of those three streams. Behind the impasse the crucial invitation to turn inwardly is hidden. Turn into your heart, to the centre of your being, where your deepest feelings and desires are. Then turn even more inwardly, behind the heart centre, where

the source of your essential being is flowing. The source is a powerful symbol of something unknowable. Connected to your physical heart and working behind each heartbeat, it is the centre of your elusive microcosm.

It calls to you to be available, to open yourself to the inspiration that emanates from your core being and, in doing so, to leave the conditioning that dominates the three personality streams as it is.

How can you do this? How can you go beyond the constant and conditioned thinking and thus reach the flow of that other energy?

Almost immediately words and images like peace - silence – inner listening, pop up within us. But within the framework of the conditioned stream of thought and feeling, these words and images just conceal the truth. The poet

Ed Hoornik writes in his poem “Having and Being”:

*“The Soul is: Being
And is: listening
Retreating
To become a child again
That gazes at the stars
And that is slowly guided there”*

Listening inwardly

In the school of Pythagoras, so the story

POWER OF THE SYMBOL

Left Page: In the Chinese world-view, the ox is the symbol of the liver. It is renewal, conversion, and contains the potential for rebirth.
©chinesemedicinecentral.com

goes, the students were not allowed to speak for three years. The aim was to develop inner listening before they could emanate anything. For Pythagoras this inner listening was the prerequisite, as he put it, to hear “the Divine Sound” that holds together all creation and is the ground of all experience of unity. His disciples were therefore not allowed to ask questions and were encouraged to find the answers in their own innermost self.

Those were questions like: What is everlasting harmony? What is the most powerful force in the world? What is the most difficult thing for human beings? In all those questions the unity of and among all creatures was always kept in sight, beyond the diversity they could observe in nature. Because unity is from within, the apparent diversity of nature finds its ground, from which it will express itself in harmony. However, this unity is elusive for the ‘I’, because it only knows and acknowledges separateness and because it can only think in terms of duality.

Thus, the Silence, the universal Divine Sound, behind all the manifested diversity of individual voices, are inaudible for that I.

Direct connection

Reaching this border a symbol can be a great help. Because symbols maintain a direct connection between the hidden Heart and the personal heart, they are an invitation, an impulse to listen in a new way, which radically ignores the three conditioned energy flows mentioned above.

What is a symbol? Inwardly, symbols always provide a recognition, an illumination in the brightness of the soul.

Karl von Eckartshausen said: “The out-

ward manifestations of true religion leads toward the inner Spirit.” And the apostle John laughed when he understood that the ignorant man just grasps everything outwardly and does not understand that the inner master turns everything into symbols.

The Greek word ‘symbolon’ refers to a seal or coin broken in two. One part was endowed to the sender’s messenger, and the receiver was in possession of the other part and so could verify its authenticity. The seal was only seemingly broken, sender and receiver stayed connected all the time (the two parts formed a whole in the end).

The distinction between sender and receiver was only temporary and outward. Whatever is imaged in a concrete symbol is always unity, universal truth. Similarly, the “Divine Sound” of Pythagoras is the truth that connects everything.

Even though an outward symbol - such as the pentagram – has a universal value, it only liberates in the observer what can be realised and is necessary within him. It is quite possible that the perceived value differs from the usual meaning that is given to it, because a symbol also always reveals an individual image, i.e. one’s own inner experience. This is a meaning which is lived through and differs from those given by the intellect. Therefore, the meaning of a symbol cannot be bound or restrained; each time it is experienced as new.

While a symbol often says more than a thousand words, it also transmits something in a much more direct, intense way than a mental or verbal explanation. An outward indication can only truly contribute to an inner understanding to the extent that it resonates inwardly, in the way that it strikes you. Then, deep down, it really works!

In its original form a symbol therefore always works; inspiring and stimulating, it opens your soul for the spirit.

It invites you to live fully - to go beyond your outdated conditioning, beyond already dug channels of thinking, feeling and acting. We speak here of course not about flags of nations and symbols for organizations or icons in smartphones, markings on packaging, ranks on uniforms, medals and advertising. Those are rather outward ways to influence your subconscious, to manipulate you to respond to existing conditioning. An outward symbol is just an unmistakable picture, however, the inner symbol within is so subtle that it is hardly noticed. In addition to a revealing aspect, the symbol also contains a mystery.

Within the symbol transcendence and immanence are mutually prevailing. It is something that lights up as an inner understanding. It is expressed as a truth beyond words. Within the soul the unknowable spirit becomes revealed and the unconscious becomes the conscious.

Through the symbol some aspects of the invisible energy that lies dormant within you can start vibrating. Thus, the symbol becomes a guide for the development of your being. If there is sufficient openness,

In its original form a symbol always works; inspiring and stimulating, it opens your soul for the spirit

the corresponding possibility is awakened within you.

If there is not yet sufficient openness, then the symbol has nothing to say to you, and it does not seem to work for you. It merely invokes for you to things that fit within your understanding and conditioning.

What is the most difficult thing for humans? The simple thing.

What is lasting harmony? It is the Immediate ever new 'now'.

What is the most powerful thing in the world? That which precedes it: silence.

Infallible compass

And therefore the same symbol or image may have a different meaning for different people, and even have a different meaning for one person at different moments. You have your own infallible compass: on someone else's navigation screen you can never follow your own life's route.

Thus, it may also become clear to you that a physical symbol is not a talisman and does not automatically deliver a spiritual development. You yourself remain responsible for the development of your soul. There is only a reaction to the extent that there is a resonance with what is already present within your core. Therefore keep the emerging picture within you, keep it secret for as long as possible. Not because of the secrecy of

a magical practice, but to avoid swiftly losing this inner resonance to outward emotion.

This may happen, for example if you are too easily excited or restless. Therefore make sure that you do not work off your inner emotion in endless talk, but let it quietly do its work within you. Otherwise, it will be, as it is said in the biblical metaphor "the killing of an inner word and image" and the effect is lost. That is why the students in the school of Pythagoras had to remain silent: to first discover the unity that lies in silence before communicating it verbally. Just as a symbol is an outward sign of an inner mystery it is the same for you, as a person. Our mutual invitation to each other is therefore: no more reminiscing about all our conditioning, but that we can be an ever new, open and alive question mark. ★

What you are and the free will



©Miya Ando, 'Evening Indigo,' 2015, Sundaram Tagore Gallery

According to International Law, autonomy means the authority for a country to pass its own laws. Spiritual independence is an important factor for the modern human being.

We like to see ourselves as autonomous and independent because only in this way we can be independent and develop freely. But how independent are we in reality? And in addition to the questions about our independence and our free will, we have to face an even more fundamental question: What am I?

A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT INDEPENDENCE FREELY INTERPRETED

It is in the nature of a human being to see himself as the cause and center of all actions, as a creator, a 'maker' who has control. But what are you? And are you really?

At first sight it seems to be clear what you are. You are always busy but often not aware of it. You may state: 'I am me, an established Ego that is separate from the others. The perception of my actions as well as the decisions are mine. Therefore I am an entity, a clearly distinguished something with special attributes and with a will to express them.'

But, 'who' you are in the context of your character, age, sex and the roles you fill in your life, does not nearly describe 'what' you are. Character traits can change over time as well as the roles you play in life. You are born and you die.

Thirst and hunger

You might ask yourself what you actually are? And if this is all there is? All these superficialities, all these changing factors? Where does 'being' even come from? Regardless if you believe in an existence after death or if you believe you won't exist after you have died, you should ask yourselves

what idea you have on this subject.

Or in other words: what was in existence before you were able to say 'I'? What was before the age of two, a time when you were not yet aware of your 'I'.

Back then you were nursed when you were hungry. You would simply start to suckle. The sucking reflex was just there in the moment. You were not aware of yourself or your surroundings. You didn't experience time or space.

Later you learned to say 'hungry'; and after that 'Joey is hungry', because you realized that you have a name. And later again, maybe after two or three years you learned to say: 'I am hungry'. By now you had acquired a concept of your 'I' to which everyone else was reacting as well. The 'I' began to have a meaning for you. You could identify with it. You had already lived for a few years but now you slowly realized: this is 'I'. Your surroundings confirmed this experience.

A further conditioning developed in the sense that 'I' is different from 'You'. The opinions others have about you became important. Your cultural values and ideas about life were shaped by the influence of your parents and your education: they

After a long search a man finds the door to God and knocks to gain entrance. A voice calls from behind the door: 'Who is there?' The man says: 'It is me, Lord.' The voice calls from behind the door: 'Go away. There are too many here.' The man goes away, filled with consternation that he is not allowed to enter after he has been on such long spiritual path. Some time later he approaches the door to God again and knocks on it gingerly. The voice calls again: 'Who is there?' The man answers: 'You, Lord.' The voice replies: 'The door is open. You were already inside. All the time you were knocking at the door from the inside.'

RUMI

became part of you. You were raised as a personality to fill all the relevant roles. And so you lost unnoticeably the spontaneous feel for who you actually are. Therefore it is not surprising that for many of us questions about our personality arise at a later point in life. Moreover the 'I' assumes it is mostly in danger. Since the 'I' is a very limited and finite being, it raises self-doubt and uncertainty. Considerations about who you are now and who you might be after death don't seem to make sense.

You experience 'being' as a reality, but how real is it in truth?

Do you really exist?

How can you know that?

How can you be so sure that you exist?

At a certain moment you will realize that thinking cannot be the basis. Even though you experience your thinking as very real, you only think that you think. It only forms the fictional basis of your existence. It is only an assumed existence

Consequently there must be something, that perceives your life from without and that attempts to let you see your existence from a completely different perspective; with the intention that you begin to ask questions about all of this. The observer cannot be the 'I' which only perceives itself. For the 'I' sees only its image, which is formed by the senses, by thinking and by feeling.

We observe that there is another thinking, another perception outside of our 'I'-consciousness.

What is it that perceives everything freely and clearly and sees things how they truly are?

It is the essence of what you truly are and what does not change and what does not play an ever changing role. It is the inner being; the being that can inspire your personality in heart and head and leads you to a free and unconditional feeling, thinking and acting.

Considerations about who you are now and who you might be after death don't seem to make sense

Recognized and known

The essential 'being' can generally not be recognized or understood by the common consciousness of the mind. It reaches far beyond that. The essence is as a matter of fact too near for the conditioned personality to experience it. This essential being is free of time and space, similar to the free state of a baby, which is also an unconditional being, even if it is still in an unconscious state.

Every human being has the opportunity to find again –fully consciously- this free being.

The only question is how to find it. The answer is as simple as it is incomprehensible for the common mind: It is the Other! And the Other has always been present.

It is incomprehensible, because the condition experiences itself as reality. Your reality became disconnected from the 'I'. The relativity of the reality of the 'I', that you respect and identify with, is brought to light by the all-permeating, true inner being. When the belief in the reality of your self-image begins to falter, an opening emerges and you will then recognize what you are not. When you can't avoid the question any longer who you truly are, then you can begin to examine it for yourself. Suggestions of other people may also help you to gain (at least mentally, outside of your 'I') a broader image of your inner being.

It is obvious that an external help cannot form a state of dependence. Instead help should only point to your inner essence

– your inner master. Although this inner being is not confined by a certain location, yet it forms a focal point, a soul nucleus that ensouls your personality. It is a soul-consciousness. In the same way a focal point or energy field forms if more people become open for their inner essence. In such an energy field your own soul can get even more in resonance with the inner essence.

Natural responsibility

The soul is a radiant glow, a light that shines between the essence and the personality and vivifies the person. You are life. This life can express itself freely in the personality; it ensouls the person. The natural responsibility originates within the soul. Now we could conclude that by becoming more open, the inner ensoulment could manifest itself better to prepare for liberation. But it is the inner, not the outer influence that makes this possible. And at the same time it does not mean the liberation of the ego, but that you will be liberated from the ego!

Free Will

The question, if we are independent and possess a free will, could be answered with a 'Yes' as well as with a 'No'. We certainly have the freedom to act within the relative. (Definition for 'relative': something dependent upon external conditions and the opposite to the absolute)
But how free is the 'Relative'? Isn't freedom bound to the relative and to everything that goes with it?
The choice is always made on the grounds of the mental consciousness based on ideas, concepts and conditionings. In contrast to that our true being is completely free and unconditioned; it is unchangeable, although paradoxically it always renews itself and is therefore always new. Therefore only the unconditioned soul consciousness

can be free and perceive what is and what happens and truly ensoul a person.

Without the tainted perspective of the person who is bound to perceive the reflections of life with his senses, the unconditioned soul-consciousness can see everything that happens. Pure consciousness. What you can do as a person is to just 'be' and recognize from deep within what the expression of life is at this moment. It is not about influencing the expression of life, but to be the expression of life itself. The personality acts and it cannot do anything else for that is the way it is made. However, you can see how the touched personality outside of the 'I' and its relative logic, follows the pure impulse of consciousness which is a timeless and immediate being.

This impulse causes a process of transformation in the Relative, though the transformation process of the relative personality is real and cannot be denied. Only from the perspective of the Absolute it is an illusion. What is remarkable is that the Absolute, the Unknown expresses itself down into matter through a new revivification of the personality. So there is real freedom, though not within a conditioned personality.

And only the conditioned personalities have the problems with the free will, because seen from the inner essence you are always free.

The expression of the will is life itself, as an unconditional freedom and as unconditional love. It is what you are as a true, autonomous soul-conscious being. And above everything is the spirit, the pure Being. It is a manifestation within a realm we would describe with the words 'non-being'. For this is the quiet serene and hidden source of all being. This is your absolute being. And so autonomy and freedom are for everyone because autonomy and freedom are equivalent to the All-Oneness, to what you truly are. ★

Stay close to the Vase in order to reveal its colours. What does this mean? How do we do this?
A search for the meaning behind these words leads to an encounter.



©Marc Chagall, Noah and the Rainbow, 1966

Colours and words from the one source

Reflecting upon the mysterious words that one 'should stay close to the vase in order to reveal its colours', I honestly barely knew at the outset what it was about. Even though I had read in the hermetic writings of the Crater, the great Divine mixing vessel, or in the Jewish wisdom-literature of the breaking of 'the vases' or 'the glass sea' at the creation. When that vase was broken, was it too high or too far off and how could I stay close to it and reveal its colours? However, despite a draught of oblivion I must have caught a glimpse of its heavenly splendour. This world immediately lost its lustre because of it. Once, brightly coloured and richly decorated but now faded to ash grey and sharply contrasting black-and white hues. Even though everything was done to fill that emptiness of existence, to give it nevertheless some colour, for example by befuddled people in drinking-bouts with stale wine.

Marc Chagall. 'Since each life inevitably leads to death, we need to colour it during our lifetime with our colours of love and hope'

The time for the best wine has yet to come, I thought, as in the Bible story of the wedding in Kana. And just as clear and silent sounded the appeal: 'Get sober, you who have given yourself to intoxication and sleep regarding God.' Disillusioned, I endured the raw emptiness of the existence in a sublunary/terrestrial world. Like the sick Fisher-King whose only relief from pain was a warm bath. Or like a fool of a knight of the grail wandering lonely through vales filled with deadly shadows. The search for the hidden vase led me on many detours. It rather looks more as if I was on the run from it, than on the road to get there. Also my participation in many academic competitions for cups ended in disillusionment. Presented as the highest to be reached, the trophies turned out to be only gilded tin. And in the meantime I let the other cup of suffering pass me by.

Vast panorama

But the call of that sublime vase to come nearer sounded ever louder and above everything else as the journey led me through an absolute low, whilst laboriously wading through the blood-red sea of passions. Thirstily wandering through the barren

desert of life, vainly knocking with my staff on the rocks of resistance. Only after my conclusion that the long sought grail-cup was not within my personal reach did I perceive in the far distance something like the border of a promised land, a holy land, the land of the grail. After all, all my desires were reaching out toward the Light of lights, calling up resistance of the dark forces through cups of poison. They took away my view of a vast panorama, far outside the borders of this nature. In the hope of liberation from these, I finally directed myself toward the light-giving vase, which was being reflected by a supernatural field of light into this lower nature. It was at that point that the advice to stay close to the vase was very helpful. Not distracted by anything, and not letting it out of my sight, it was always close by and yet at a distance. Although one

Seemingly hollow sounding images receive a new content, worn out images are within a multitude of dimensions newly coloured

would love to get a hold of it and never let it go, I learned to approach it cautiously and with great respect. After all it is pure crystal and only susceptible to the highest of Light energies. A lower frequency will have it shattered into pieces. Or if it were mixed with something adverse its contents will begin to ferment into a dangerous mixture. Then it is better to close it hermetically and not to top it up with what is useless and superfluous. That can only be done, I thought, by going the narrow way of self-negation. Neither fill it up with personality characteristics nor colour it with personal qualities. Do not keep its rich gifts for your own use or consider them as a privileged possession. Only by becoming less against the growing Other will the garish colours fade and as in a crucible, will all selfishness dissolve.

Looking within

It is only possible to make the correct distinction, by moving out of the way. Between what belongs in the vase and what belongs outside of it, between the finite and the infinite, Light and darkness. And then, as in an alchemical retort all the old is changed and renewed. All that was fixed and crystalized is dissolved and purified. The self is quieted and silent like an emptied vase. Then at last the fullness of the spirit is revealed, not just partly but fully

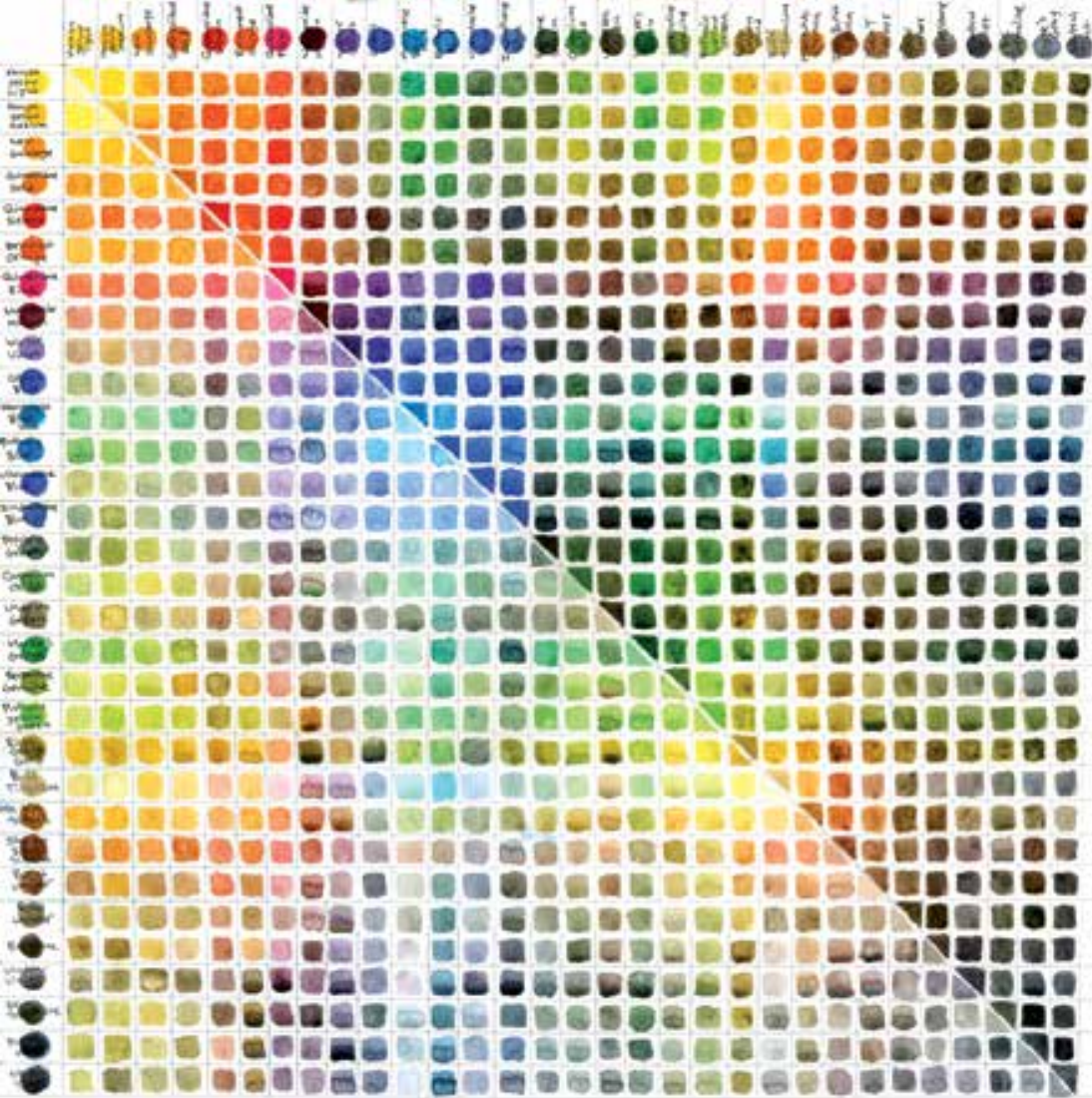
and face to face. Not visible to earthly eyes but for the inwardly gazing eye. And it turns out: the language isn't quite right, something is wrong with the tone. I remain stuck at the well-known procedures. I do not succeed in guiding it toward something new and unexpected, something that won't let itself be slowed down by predictable thought patterns. That is why my story still misses 'colour' and only knows a linear interval of time. Instead of revealing the colours of the vase, in a language of light with letters of fire, and in that way will offer a view of the mighty and great event of salvation that encompasses all beings.

For no other reason than that I have heard that this Age of Aquarius has begun for the entire world and humanity. This one pulls the old rug from underneath our feet and brings a total world revolution. Because of it everything can now be seen in its full richness of colours in a much larger perspective. Hasn't the hermetic mixing vessel been sent down as a baptismal font to immerse the entire field of creation in it? Isn't the spiritual font working in the middle of this earth as an energetic power centre? Aren't we called to gather around this grail cup incessantly realizing that we ourselves are not that vase? Without narrow-minded self-satisfaction or blind triumphalism subservient to keep the

way to that vase open? Only then the one golden ray of Light can be split into seven rays as if through a glass sea. Only then the healing streams of the Seven-spirit will flow abundantly and show its full colour spectrum.

In connection with this Catherose de Petri speaks about the numerous possibilities that are presently unfolding in the seven new colours, all together forming the One True Light, seven red colours relating to the blood, seven orange colours for the nerve fluid, seven yellow colours for the consciousness, seven green colours for the workings of faith and hope, seven blue colours for the senses, seven indigo colours for the dynamic energy, and seven violet colours on the radiation field of deliverance.

As she says in her booklet 'the Golden Rosycross': 'when we mix these seven times seven colours, these forty-nine rays, in the right manner, we obtain the colour white. Then we finally wear the perfect,



immaculate, pure white garments, as the Holy language says, 'out of the Blood of the Lamb', the indication for the Radiation-fullness of the seven cooperating Foci of the Universal Chain. It is the Living Water of the Universal Gnosis.' Thus the vase is no longer high and inaccessible, wherever we go, but very near. No longer hidden and difficult to find, but in full view, clearly and directly perceptible for everyone. All its gifts, the universal remedy, the panacea or the elixir of life or however it is termed - abundant and freely poured out to the benefit and healing of many.

Giveaway

This asks from us, that we do not keep anything for ourselves. Or that we keep our cup full of expectation only open at the top or even closed. No, they must be handed out to those around us - to anyone who asks for it. All that we receive is to be immediately given away and shared with all who draw from the same source - with those who just like us keep their eyes directed to the vase. In that encounter, old and seemingly hollow images receive a new interpretation. Worn out images with in a multitude of dimensions get freshly coloured. Let us place some of these well-

known images around the vase. Like the one of the man with the jar who shows the disciples the way to the upper hall, the wedding hall, for the joint service of the priestly love-sacrament.

Like the celebration of the Last Supper, in the presence of the Master of the Grail, anointed with nard oil from an alabaster jar. And, after the washing of the feet, the one of the passing around of the chalice and the raising of the drinking cup. The vision of the holy vase and caught in it as a heavenly dew the seven drops of the glorified blood of the redeemer. And dipped therein the serpent of the new consciousness, as the beloved apostle John is sometimes depicted, propagating that vase to the furthest remote corners. Inviting all of humanity to be taken up into the chain of the brotherhood of the higher evolution, together with all the liberated souls being led upward in a colourful intergalactic tornado, to the universal Throne of the Light. ★

Nicolas of Cusa

1401-1464

From every window, on the other side of the river, you can see the vineyards ascending against the valley wall. The dates of the highest tides of the Moselle river are carved into the outside walls as if to warn us that such an idyllic-looking river cannot be fully tamed. In 1995, the water must have reached a man's height, just as in 1997 and 2011. We face the beautiful birthplace of Nicholas of Cusa, the most famous son of the distant German Moselle village of Kues.

T

The often uncontrollable Moselle River and other nearby waterways were crucial for Nicholas and his fellow villagers. Whoever wanted to travel or transfer merchandise was almost entirely delegated to the river; upstream to Trier, downstream to Koblenz, where a new world unfolded from the Rhine. Downstream people came through Cologne to the cities of The Netherlands: Arnhem, Nijmegen, Deventer, Zwolle, Utrecht, Leuven. Upstream it went to Mainz and Basle, and from there Italy beckoned: Milan, Padua, Ferrara, Florence and Rome. All these cities were pickets that would spatially border the life of this influential German thinker of the fifteenth century.

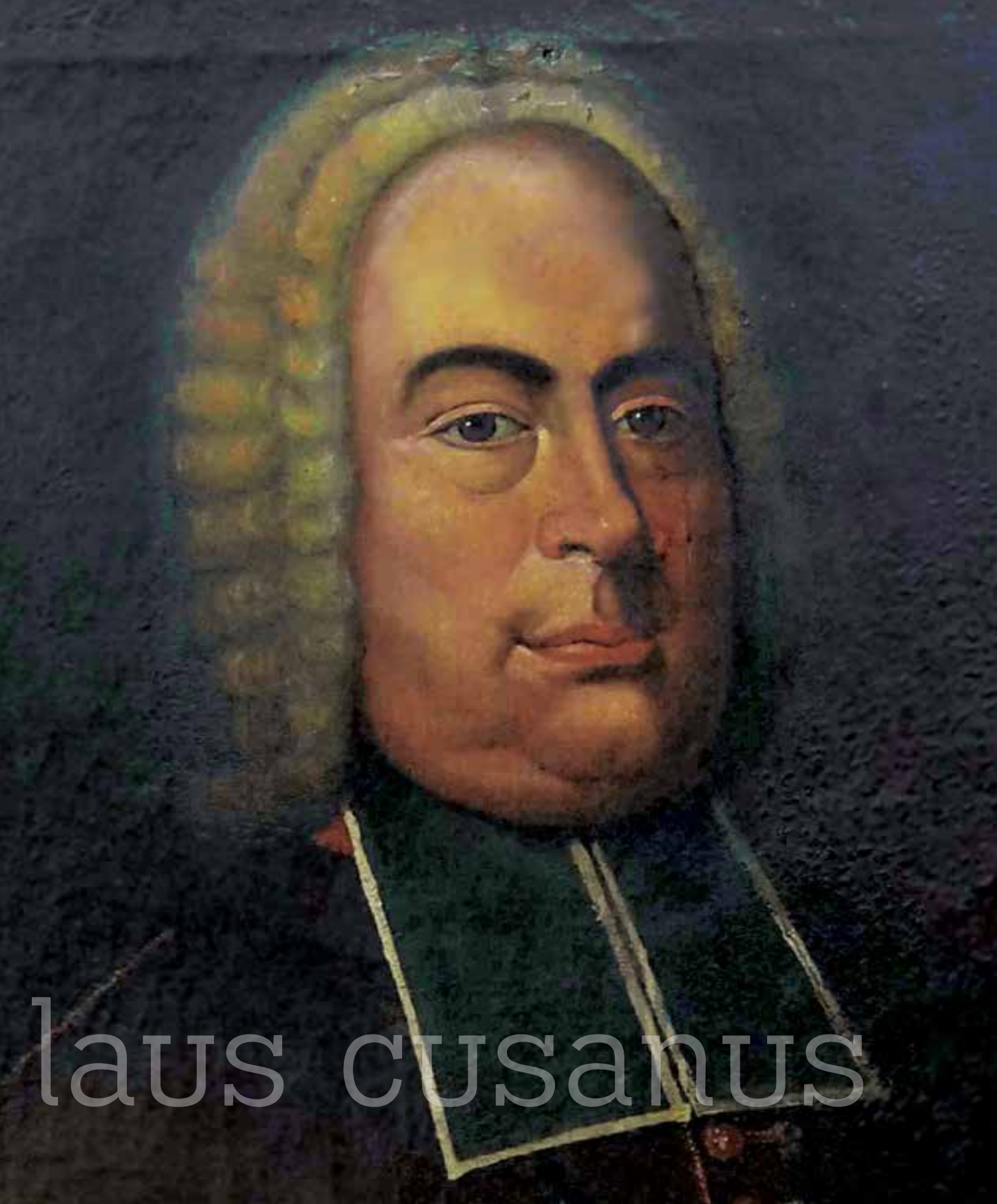
I.

AT THE CROSSROAD OF TIMES

Cusanus compares the relationship between God and man to that between a money counterfeiter and a money-changer. He emphasizes the invisibility and the reservation of the coin counterfeiter on the one hand and the indispensability of the exchanger and the user who need to know the values of the currencies relative to each other. With completely unknown coins one cannot trade or buy anything on the market. In a similar way, man has a unique position. He determines the value of things and if he does not do that, the existence of what God has created remains lacking in useful value.

These and similar subtle metaphors about the relationship between God and man

nico



laus cusanus

THE NETHERLANDS

*The church reforms advocated by the movement of the *devotio moderna*, found warm approval from the ambitious reformer Cusanus. He is considered a friend and supporter of the movement and it is certainly not a coincidence that he gave the control of his hospital for the poor in Kues to a Carthusian monastery and to a daughter convent of the movement at Windesheim. Examination of the documents now available, however, no longer gives support to the persistent assumption that Nicholas was at school in Deventer at the 'Brothers of the Common Life'.

The confusion comes from the *bursa cusana*, which was made available by will to Deventer for the 'needy students' from the Middle Moselle region. The *bursa cusana* came into force in 1469 by proxy for Cusana had died some five years earlier. Biographers had assumed until then that Cusa himself had been at school in Deventer and therefore encouraged others to do likewise.

*Also in modern writings there are communications or references from Cusa to The Netherlands, for example in the books of the Dutch author Harry Mulisch. Cusanus is a key figure in the work of Mulisch. We cite from 'Het woord bij de daad' (The action followed by the word) from 1968: 'This amazing cardinal - whose books even bear dialectical titles (...) introduced a mystical dialectical concept in the fifteenth century, the *coincidentia oppositorum*: the coincidence of the opposites. Just like the philosopher Hegel would later define the coincidence of 'being' and 'nothingness' as the prerequisites for creation. Furthermore, he was the precursor of Copernicus and he was also the first to state that space is infinite. Presumably the dialectician Cusa - of whom I shall at some later time publish more details - had something to do with the discovery of America'. (P. 113-114) Mulisch had been at Kues several times and was also a member of the Cusanus circle. According to Marita Mathijsen, he saw Cusanus as a coincidence of the opposites himself, because 'with one leg he still stands in the metaphysical and occult Middle Ages and with his other in the empirical science'.

Mulisch discovered an intriguing fact about the infamous year 1492. At the deathbed of Cusa in Todi (August 11, 1464) a befriended doctor was present - Toscanelli - who was also a geographer. This man was later the instigator of Columbus. Taken all together, for Mulisch this must have been, in literary terms an extremely inspiring coincidence.

were a specialty of the fifteenth-century philosopher Cusanus but it went broader. Cusanus was also the inventor of the convex and concave lenses with which we still perform eye corrections. At the same time, he was the designer of the Gregorian calendar, which still applies today. And he was a most versatile scholar and diplomat. It was not remarkable that his father Hennen Kryffts was a ship owner and merchant but exceptional in those days was the fact that he paved the way so that his talented son could study at the distant Heidelberg university at the early age of fifteen

Money

Reliable sources on the childhood of Cusanus are scarce. It is indisputable however that he could rely on two major plus factors in his youth: money and educational training. Money would play a specific and important role throughout his life, also as a pictorial metaphor. Whoever enters his birthplace house with its robust architecture, its luxurious living rooms plus library and the eye-catching coat of arms, can draw but one conclusion: father Hennen must have been a very rich wine merchant. The ecclesiastical chroniclers of those days were apparently a little bit embarrassed about it - a leading priest with great personal wealth, not at all fitting the image

of the ideal of poverty that the monasteries, in particular of the modern devotion, wanted to put forward. In a cartulary of a Carthusian monastery, we find an anecdote that in a festive visit Cusanus did not want to recognize his beautifully and luxuriantly dressed sister Klara who also attended, because she ignored with her clothes 'that she is of poor descent'. 'A purely fictitious story', says the young researcher who gives a PowerPoint presentation about the early years of the prelate, during our visit to the home library. 'It only serves to raise awareness of the proper compliance with the monastic rules and to stress the fact that Cusanus was an exemplary monk'. He pointed out another striking biographical fact where again money played a role in the background. Cusanus devoted himself to the priesthood only in his 37th year, while his younger brother John had taken that step long before him. Did he want the relationship with the trading company of the family which he, as an elder son, should head, to be left open as long as possible? Did he maybe not want to give away his inheritance rights? Or did he – a born diplomat – want to keep his hands free with regard to church influence? The fact is that Cusa managed, posthumously, to donate the family fortune to found a hospital for the poor in his hometown. Thirty-three old men from all positions: six of nobility, six of the clergy and 21 'ordinary' citizens could be given shelter and care there. Now also giving care for women, the Cusanus foundation still stands intact and in use after six centuries. The white building with a monumental library with unique manuscripts is an iconic symbol of the village. Nicolas himself never saw it. He died on August 11, 1464 in Todi. His heart rests in the Cusanus foundation. His body was buried in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli, Italy.

Education

After several years of study in Heidelberg, Nicholas went to Padua to study law, mainly Church law. He completed his studies in 1423 as a doctor in canonical law. In Padua, Nicholas made a lot of friends who later would gain significant ecclesiastical positions, such as the later popes Nicholas V and Pius II.

After Padua he went to Cologne to study theology and philosophy where he was undoubtedly influenced by the widely respected philosopher Brabant Heymeric van de Velde (Hemerichus Campo 1395-1460) who lectured at Cologne. In the meantime his thinking must have been affected by the coincidentia oppositorum, a standing expression for the coincidence of the opposites. Simultaneously Cusanus gave lectures in Cologne on Church Law, but in fact he went to Cologne with the underlying intention to study the works of the versatile Catalan philosopher Ramon Lull. The ideas of this colourful Catalan would later influence many of Cusanus' activities as a tireless peacemaker between Islam and Christianity. When he could not satisfy his interest in Lull in Cologne, he went to Paris in 1428 where he made extracts of his works.

Books

The study visit to Paris also satisfied his quiet additional wish to buy books on a large scale. For the same reason, on the way back to Cologne, he visited the northern French town of Laon, in those days a centre of science and culture. Throughout his life, wherever he was, Cusanus purchased books and curious objects

Cusa posthumously donated his family fortune to found a hospital for the poor in Kues

in quantities. For the collector Cusanus, life was a permanent education, reading being an attitude of life!

After that, things went quickly! Nicolas began to be recognised as a scientist but he felt that his future would not be shaped in a scientific environment. Twice he declined an offer to lecture at the famous Leuven University.

His first success was that he could prove that the famous Donatio Constantini (2) was a fake. A second great scientific success had to wait for recognition since it remained concealed from the public for a century. Cusanus made a new design for the Julian calendar and submitted this for approval to the Basel Consilium in 1436: the was 'The reparation calendarii'. It was not accepted directly but when his proposal was later reconsidered in the Ecclesiastical Council of Trent it was introduced in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII who immediately named it after himself: the Gregorian calendar, currently still in use. The calendar reformer himself had to make do with a sober stone souvenir on the bridge between Kues and Bern-Kastel.

Money and scientific education, as previously mentioned, were the pillars on which Nicolas based his life. But in psychological terms there was a gap. He was not of noble birth and socially but of modest origin. In that time you had to be of the nobility to become a bishop or higher. However, his intention that he wanted to acquire the cardinal hat and sit daily at the table with the great ones of the earth, is repeatedly expressed in his texts. Apparently, he had the need to address it repeatedly. This could indicate that he always felt an outsider, a price that geniuses often have to pay.

II. ON THE WORLD STAGE

As little as we know with certainty about the young years of Cusanus the sources that relate to his later life, his life in the spotlight of the world stage, are very comprehensive and accessible.

Initially, Nicolas of Cusa seemed the ideal figure to make a career in the office of the Church of Rome. As the Pope's ambassador he had often been successful in mediating in theological and political issues

However, on one of his many travels - while returning from an attempt to reconcile the Church of Constantinople with that of Rome – something significant occurred.

At the sight of the sea, 'as a gift from above, of the father of the Light', he had a decisive experience that influenced him for the rest of his life, which made him realise that the unity in any area whatsoever came before all the fragmentation.



The birthplace of Nicolas de Cusa is in Bernkastel-Kues, a town in Rhineland-Palatinate where a museum is dedicated to the thinker Cusanus

GOD AND SIGHT

'Christian: Deus (God) is derived from Theoro, that is, "I see". For as sight is to the realm of colour, so God is to our realm. For colour is not apprehended in any way other than by sight; and in order that sight can readily apprehend every colour, the centre of sight is without colour. Therefore, sight is not present in the realm of colour, since sight is without colour. Hence, with respect to the realm of colour, sight is nothing rather than something. For the realm of colour does not attain unto a being that is outside its own realm; instead, it affirms the being of all that is present in its own realm, where it does not find sight. Therefore, sight, since it is without colour, is unnameable within the realm of colour, for the name of no colour corresponds to it. However, through its power of discrimination, sight has given a name to each colour. Hence, in the realm of colour all naming depends on sight, but the name of sight — from which every name derives — is thought to be the name of nothing rather than of something. So, then, God is to all things as sight is to things visible.

Pagan: What you have said pleases me. And I understand clearly that in the realm of all creatures neither God nor His name is found and that God escapes all conception rather than being affirmed to be something. For in the realm of creatures, that which escapes the condition of creation is not found. Furthermore, in the realm of composites the incomposite is not found. Now, all names that are named are of composites. But a composite does not derive from itself but derives from that which precedes every composite. And although both the realm of composites and all the composites themselves are through the incomposite that which they are, nevertheless since [the incomposite] is not composite, it is not known within the realm of composites. Therefore, may God, who is hidden from the eyes of all the wise of the world, be blessed forever'.

Fragment from *Dialogus de deo abscondito* – Dialogues about the Hidden God.

In summary, one could say that God does not belong to the order where names are valid, just like seeing and colour belong to different orders. Names work well where distinction is made. But God is just not one of the distinguished quantities. Yet in this dialogue there is also a connection between both areas indicated: as it is assumed to distinguish colours, God is the premise of all discernment.

Cusanus' surname was Crifftz, which means lobster



ABOUT LOVE

Cusanus regularly referred to Love in his work but he never wrote a comprehensive work on Love. For his views on love we must research his dozens of sermons. Those were not matched to the everyday routine or contextually bound. Especially from his time as a bishop in Brixen, between 1454 and 1457, many sermons have been preserved. They exhibit a chronological structure and a deeply thoughtful theme. He had taken notes and made improvements to all sermons in the margin and he kept them in a specific order. This could indicate that he intended to put them in book form but that never came to be. It seems that the sermons had been given to a select group of skilled clerics and academics because it was certainly not simple food with which Cusanus confronted his audience (5).

In almost all of his sermons he called the believers to become aware of their calling as a living image of God, as an image bearer of God, and to live according to this inner divine image. This means that human beings have to use their divinely related qualities - intellectuality and free will – to become conscious of their divine image. According to the cardinal, man is called to come to 'intellectual and free self-realization and he can transform himself through that path into his True Self'. That was the thread throughout all his sermons.

For Cusanus, Love was interwoven with freedom and intellect.

'Indeed, God created man as a free and intelligent being so that he is in the situation, by loving and acquiring knowledge, to return to his origins and to recognize its glory. Man naturally possesses a driving force that keeps him focussed on his origin'.

The affection, as manifested in love, should always be backed up by the intellect.

'For without the influence of intellect, love is blind', Cusanus makes clear with the following humorous Latin proverb: *Si quis amat ranam, ranam putat esse Dianam*. Which translates into: a loved one may find that he loves a frog and confuses it in his blind love for the beautiful moon goddess Diana...

Therefore, affection and intellect cannot exist without each other in the vision of the cardinal. 'The spirit is the principle of intellect and affection. The spirit is a simple, superlative power, where knowing and loving coincidence'. This is due to the coincidence of 'intelligere and amare' in the absolut to which humanity strives and in which one finds one's highest happiness. The equivalence of intellect and love is reflected in an aspect that is important for a good understanding of Cusanus' opinion of freedom. Both intellect and love are originally and essentially 'free'; indeed, both of them derive their dignity precisely from that circumstance.

For Cusanus, love is thus far more than just an unconsciously deep striving, much more than a primal urge in a human being. He is only concerned with the love that goes its own way and is aimed at its own purpose. For true - that is unfeigned love - cannot be enforced. God has created man as a free and intelligent being so that he may choose freely for himself.

This, of course, also means that the divine love can be refused (6). Cusanus proves to be refreshingly modern with his freedom view of Love. For centuries, Christianity had sighed under Augustine's predestination teachings. Without mentioning him, Cusanus definitely distances himself from it.

It was as if Nicolas of Cusa was offered a new life program, a program that would continually echo in his later life and would bring forth all his remaining latent talents. On the one hand, the Dominican Cusanus was a seemingly conventional medieval church prelate and an intense pious mystic. On the other hand, he was a hermetic, the forerunner of Copernicus, and well-known for his ground breaking work in science and philosophy.

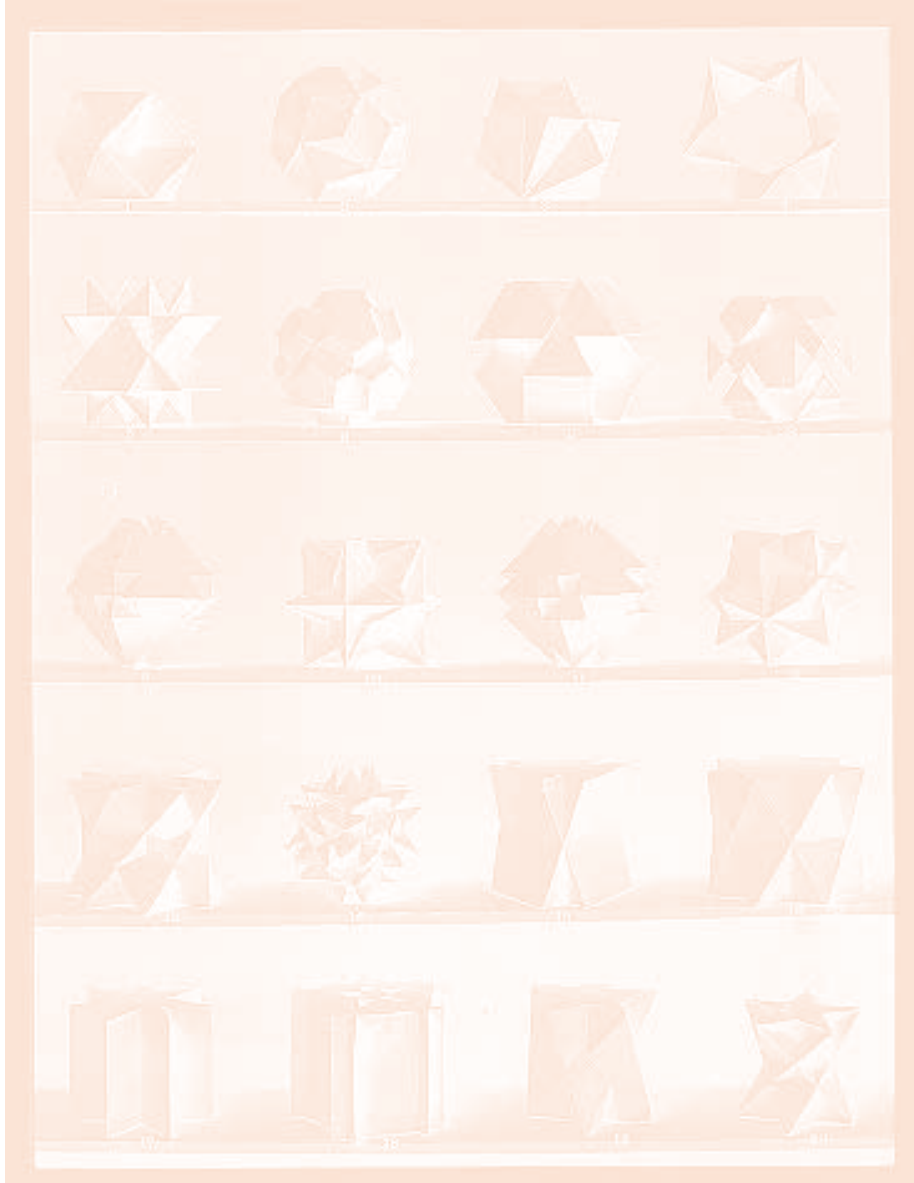
- Thus he precluded the heliocentric teachings of Copernicus by establishing that the earth was not the fixed centre of the Universe, as was assumed in the Middle Ages but that it moved through space itself.
- He was the first to produce a modern map of Central Europe, not only marking his own dwelling place on it but also the cultural area from which the new era would develop.
- He was also the inventor of hollow or concave lenses, which correct near-sightedness.

The Unnameable

But first and foremost Cusanus was a great thinker who instigated a new impetus at the moment when the time of the medieval Mystics was over. He was one of the first influential thinkers who took the sensory perception of man seriously. Thanks to Cusanus, empiricism (3) made its timid entrance. He was also the first to change the medieval image of God by stating that God was so great that He was outside of His creation.

'If God is infinite', Cusanus stated, 'He cannot possibly stand outside of the creation, nature and cosmos. He has no boundaries and is therefore everywhere'. He expressed very explicitly that God is not all things but that he is in all things. According to Cusanus, God does not coincide with things, as e.g. in pantheism. God remains the Total Other. The well-known biologist and philosopher Rupert Sheldrake, the theoretician behind the so-called morphogenetic fields, has adopted this image of God in his theory formation under the name of panentheism.

In complete accordance with the hermetic tradition, Cusanus stated that God is the 'Unnameable' and that at the same time is present and at one with all names. For God, no description is possible but he will be 'touched in every effort'. His thinking



'God cannot
possibly stand
outside of the
creation'

.....

If man does not determine the value of things, then what God has created remains without value

was about the infinite being of God and he saw it as his task to outline the concept of infinity.

Currency Changer

Cusanus compared the relationship between God and man with that between the money maker (God) and the money changer (a human), a profession that was becoming more and more important in view of the increasing economic traffic in his days and the rise of the cities. But also for the client, an efficient and correct money exchange was an extremely important skill. The intelligence that was necessary meant that you could exchange money well and usefully, otherwise you could not reach your destination because you had to go through a lot of currency zones! Cusanus emphasised the reticence of the money maker and the indispensability of humans that must determine the value of the coins (as mentioned previously). Therefore, humanity has a unique position. If man does not determine the value of things, then what God has created remains without value. You can compare such an existence with coins of a completely foreign and unknown currency with which you cannot afford anything. The money changer must recognize the coins of many small territories. He must determine the value of the coins by size, number and weight. And ... money of which you cannot determine the value, has lost all meaning!

Holy ignorance

In Cusanus' views on world and humankind, a good person is someone who is 'humble, persevering and God-seeking'. The human soul carries the living image of God and, according to him, man himself is a 'small world', a microcosm. Human cognition can only reach its completion in the union with God.

In his writing *De quaerendo Deum* (About the Search for God) this is further elaborated for the God Seeker in a path of healing comparable to the well-known Jacob's ladder in the Bible. The lower steps on that ladder is the sensory world, nature and the cosmos. This often contains loose, incoherent impressions. Then the step of the mind follows, bringing order by means of words and connections in which humans tend to think in opposites. Through meditation and contemplation, one can then ascend to the phase of the intellect (the reason) by which one can overcome the opposites and coincides with a synthesis (*coincidentia oppositorum*) (4). The spiritually ripening man then comes to the humble sense of 'holy' or 'learned' ignorance (*docta ignorantia*), a conscious not-knowing, a deep insight into the limits of

Footnotes

1. Heymeric van de Velde, *Eenheid in de tegengelen* (Unity in the opposites), ed. M. Hoenen, Baarn 1990.
2. The *Donatio Constantini* (Donation of Constantine) is a Latin charter from the eighth century. This piece is also called *Constitutum Constantini* (Constantin's Order). According to the report, Constantine would have given the bishop of Rome the authority over the world. The *Donatio Constantini* played a great role throughout the Middle Ages in the struggle between the pope and the princes. Only in the fifteenth century, Nicolas from Kues (1433) and the Italian humanist Lorenzo Valla (seven years later) proved that the charter was a fake.
3. Very incomplete. I would like to describe empiricism as a philosophical movement in which sensory perceptions are crucial. We would not have had any awareness before we gained sensory experiences.
4. The teaching of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the unity of the opposites, was a breakthrough and had fervent followers like Carl Gustave Jung and the author Harry Mulisch.

human perception, which is why it is also called ‘conscious ignorance’.

Here is a wall for the pilgrim on the path, a hurdle that, according to Cusanus, can only be overcome by God’s grace. If the seeker endures this phase, then paradise unlocks, a form of consciousness that is a prelude to eternal life.

Asclepius

Cusanus regularly used hermetic terminology. That is no coincidence. He had the oldest script of Asclepius (from the ninth century) present in those days in Europe and often quoted it with consent (7). It is alleged that he was so keen to cite Asclepius in order to mask the fact that he strongly supported the works of Eckhart, which were forbidden because of a papal ban. The cardinal from Kues must have recognized much of his hermetic thinking in Eckhart (8). He derived from Asclepius a new and for that time optimistic vision: ‘Man is a second God. As God is the creator of all spiritual entities and forms in nature, man is the creator of reasonable truths and artful forms’.

Seed of the new time

Cusanus shared his vision of man during his many travels as a diplomat and as a deputy of the pope. At the age of 31, he caused a sensation during a ruling at the Council of Basel. He was not yet a priest and acted as a lawyer for his regional colleague Ulrich von Manderscheid who had asked the council for a decision in an ecclesiastical dispute concerning a nomination. Nicolas from Kues confronted the bishops and worldly leaders present with the following statement:

‘Since people are by nature free, any government, whether based on written laws, or embodied in a ruler, should only be in agreement and consent of those who are subject to it’ (9).

The dignitaries were surprised, and could hardly believe what they were hearing! Did the vineyard owner from Coesse speak thus?

Until then, medieval man had not been much more than an often silent pawn in a tight class-based society, a creature that merely bowed to the will of his monarch. Our man from the desolate Moselle village had to use all his natural authority to let his bold statement take effect. And ... he was not laughed out of court!

Time seemed ripe for renewal. The humble subjects would become free persons with rights and duties. The seed for the new era of the Renaissance had been sown. This happened in Basel, in 1432.

The self-conscious Nicolas would take the transition from his birthplace (estimated at 300 inhabitants, sixty families, now: 4600 inhabitants) to Heidelberg, to call himself Nicolas of Cusa or Cusanus from that moment on, as the story tells us. That does not seem to be correct. Nicolas had registered himself in Heidelberg as ‘Nycolaus Cancer de Coesse’ and also used the lobsters in his weapon. Only in 1440 his friend, the famous Italian humanist Ennea Silvio Piccolomini started to call him Nicolaus Cusanus. ★

5. Isabelle Mandrella has thematically analysed the sermons in her dissertation ‘Viva Imago Die praktische Philosophie des Nicolaus Cusanus (The Practical Philosophy of Nicolas Cusanus)’.

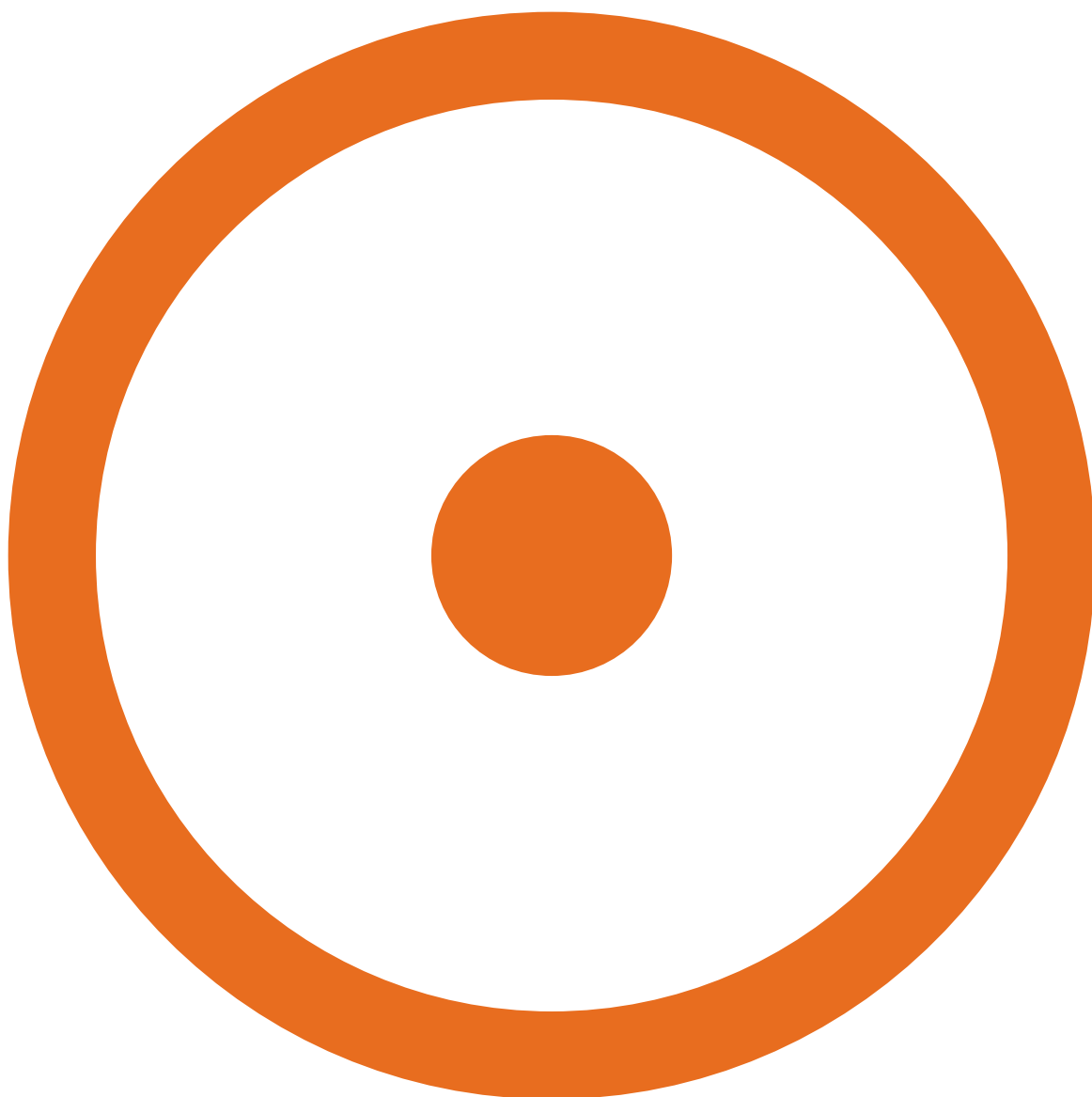
6. Prof. Dr. Isabelle Mandrella (Ludwig-Maximilians University of Munich) held the Cusanus lecture on this subject in January 2015. Her text would be in book form by the end of 2015. She was kind enough to give an insight into her story.

7. Inigo Bocken, *De kunst van het verzamelen (The Art of Collecting)*, Budel 2004, 104. According to the author, it is ‘not unlikely’ that Cusanus was familiar with the hermetic concepts through a Latin translation of the writing of Asclepius by Apuleius, a handwritten manuscript which was present in the library in Kues.

8. Gilles Quispel, *The reception of the Asclepius in the Middle Ages*, in: G. Quispel (ed.) *Asclepius*, Amsterdam 1996, 227 - 251, Cusanus and Eckhart, 238 – 241.

9. The text was later included in the *Concordantia catholica* from 1434.

Literature may be requested



Sol – sun – gold

How profound is the thinking of Mani who teaches us that the souls of the dead, after dying, first travel to the moon in order to develop there to full maturity. The moon is the symbol of the soul, the sun is the symbol of the spirit. “When the moon (the soul) is full, it passes them on to the sun, the spirit, where they receive new life”.

The sun is the ancient symbol of the fountain of life and of the healing of humanity. The sun-wheel, also teaches us how the immovable and the movable can combine. The true art of life where the motionless axis is like the “immovable mover”.

The sun is the light and the energy of the consciousness. It lights up the darkness and it is also a symbol of immortality and resurrection. Rising, shining brightly and then setting again also symbolizes the path of life of humanity.

In alchemy the old image of the world, the sun turning around the earth, represents the alternation between rising and setting that keeps the transformation in constant movement. Immortal as it is, it is also the image of the immortal gold.

Christ as the sun of justice, enlightens the intellect. (Sol justitiae illustra nos:) “The sun of justice enlightens us” is the motto of Utrecht University. And we read in the Old Testament: “But for you who fear my name, the sun of justice shall rise and there will be healing under its wings”. Maleachi 4:2



Hildegard von Bingen, “The Angels Choir.” In her book *Scivias*, she sketched the way of liberation and gives an impression of the origin and structure of the Universe.

Memories of a better future

Let the past rest, do not worry about tomorrow, live in the now. This sounds good. It's a nice endeavor to take on life every day as it comes. But the now it is not without past and no future. Each moment is part of the time. Time does not stop. The memory can even be a perspective of the future.

The course of our life largely determines how we shall remember it later. At the same time, our memory partly determines how we regard our life. Life and memory balance each other out and cannot be separated. Our past experiences colour future events for us and rather often hinder our life in the present moment. Nevertheless, we still need them. Without the benefit of experience, we will not be able to develop ourselves and will not be able to stand firm in this world.

Be they sweet or harsh, the memories you gather in your life are sometimes heavy as lead and at other times light as a feather. Sometimes they are poured into concrete and other times they meander back and forth. They nestle in our brain, we feel them working in our blood and they leave their traces in our body. In short, they influence us greatly.

A human being gathers experiences in huge quantities. It is best to avoid contemplating this endlessly by asking yourself 'why?' Rather look at what you can do with it. Decide for yourself how your memories will grow into an experience that stays with you, one that will grow as you grow and will not hinder you.

In this way a memory may act as counsellor for our thoughts. Our thinking is our strongest talent and the mightiest weapon we possess, for our thoughts steer our actions and are often the instigators of our emotions. Our thinking can make us greater than we were before, but also smaller than necessary. Our thoughts can also make us vulnerable. We make ourselves

smaller when we fill our thoughts with jealousy, anger or fear, such as our fear for the unknown, our anxiety for what others may say about us, our worry about ourselves and the world around us. We may then follow the advice: 'set a guard before your thoughts' in order to put a halt to these thoughts. In which case you actually only make yourself small and insignificant and life a little less beautiful. Why not

turn it around: open the windows, clean the windowpanes, look around you and observe the world. Your thoughts will then be larger for they focus on all the options open to you, such as the possibilities to love and the gift of trust. These kinds of thoughts make us larger. They open hearts, feed heads and incite us to be a brave human being. Everyone is capable of practicing this kind of openness.

Reliability

The origin of our thoughts lies more or less in the experiences that we have had and the sort of memories we make out of them. Memories are certainly not objective; they are just as unreliable as the experiences we have had. No experience is exactly the same for two participants or observers. What we see is influenced greatly by, for example, the framework of things that happened



Douwe Draaisma (Nijverdal, 1953) studied psychology and philosophy at the University of Groningen. After his studies, he left for the University of Utrecht, where he obtained a PhD in 1993 with Piet Vroon on the metaphorical nature of the language in which we think and speak about memory. About the autobiographical memory, so far, four books have appeared: *Why life is getting faster when you grow older* (2001), *The Home Weave Factory* (2008), *Forget Book* (2010) and in 2016 *If my memory does not cheat me*.

earlier in the day, by the point of view of the observer, by the reactions of other people present, or by our own background.

We store these experiences in our memory storage bank which then does its own thing with it by turning it into a specific memory. Then that memory will expand or diminish through new experiences and events and will thus change. What does all this re-writing and reviewing mean for the reliability of our memories? And is it actually about reliability? Can memories even contradict themselves at specific moments and at the same time both be 'true'? These questions are central in the books of Douwe Draaisma, professor of the history of psychology. He gave his most recent book the title *If my memory doesn't play me false*, which is the motto of a well-known character of the Dutch cartoonist Marten Toonder. 'Because', he writes provocatively, 'something that happened in our youth is often the result of something that happened later in our life. And maybe more often than we would like.' We live in a dreamed 'now' and an imagined past and they are directly connected.

If we shine our light on our dream, then do we dream or are we being dreamed? It seems to us as if we dream ourselves because we shape our reality with regard to form and content.

How does this process work? It all happens in our brain, in our so-called mind, via the program that we run in our head, our mindset. We do not - we cannot - objectively interpret our impressions and events via our senses for there is no real objectivity. We interpret it in a creative way for which we first decode our perceptions into references that fit into our (conservative) mindset. That is to say, we match them with what already resonates with our impression from the past and is thus recognized by us. After that we 'load' our daily life with what is available in our mindset and we call this 'download' our reality. But it is actually a creation, a dreamed-up present. Be that as it may, it is still a good thing that we ourselves are at the helm of this dream ship.

In daily practice however we mainly use the unconscious files of our mindset or, just as bad, our prejudices and biases. A dreamed-up present thus turns into a prejudiced pres-

ent. In this way our memory is a puppet of this dreamed-up present. We may upload our memory with elements from our dreamed present. People also reshape their memories through new experiences, and we may well ask ourselves if our memory is actually that trustworthy. The recently deceased scientist Oliver Sacks said in this context: 'There is no objective reality. Everything stands in relation to us and is coloured by the present. It is impossible to determine what really happened.'

Emotions

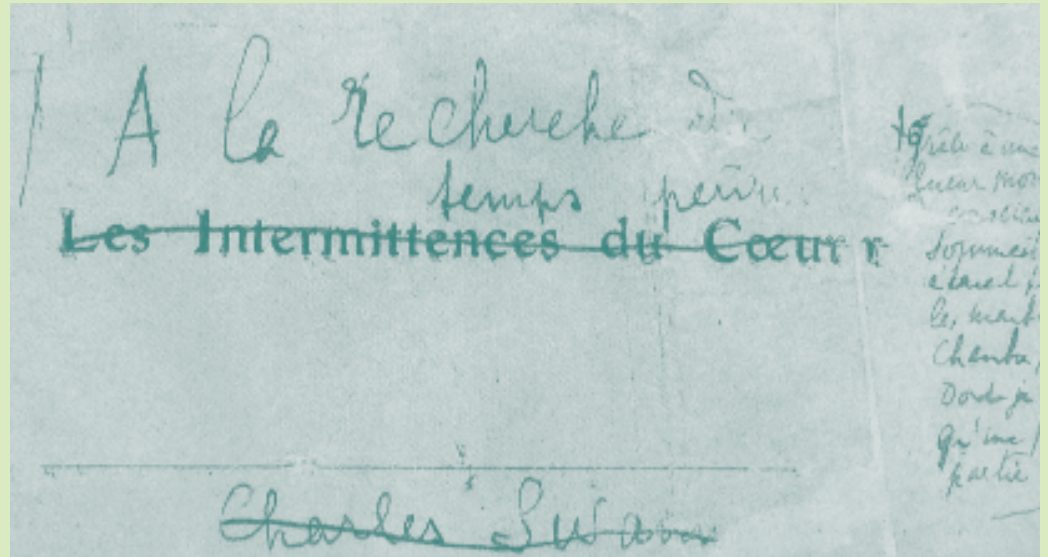
Last year on the world stage we have seen an alarming, intricate and especially disordered battle arena, and this disarray has continued in 2017. It is a disorder that up to now cannot be channelled into composure by anything or anybody. Human beings are experts in agitating and cheating. We orchestrate this partly by just fantasizing events and then presenting them as true in order to disrupt and gain advantage in the publicity stakes. Indeed, fake news. But the borderline between fake and real has been vague for a long time already. Since our post-modern era began, society has taken leave

of the concept 'truth', for no two people experience reality in the same way.

As the Spanish moviemaker Louis Bunuel phrased it: 'Our memory is constantly beset by fantasies and dreams and because it is attractive to believe in the 'reality' of the imaginary, we ultimately make our lies into our truth.'

'Post-modernism is the new populism', stated the Italian philosopher Maurizio Ferraris. With the commonplace platitude 'from my perspective' or 'that's yourloo-out', everyone has coined his own truths, and many Internet forums thrive on this attitude. The Internet is saturated with fictional truths that originated in collective emotions.

It goes like this: people hear or read a story and react to it by verbal abuse or, at the other end of the spectrum, with sympathy. They write or say: 'That is exactly how I feel' or 'That's how I see it, too', after which their own story follows, often even before the first speaker has finished. A shared experience calls up a shared emotion, a feeling of togetherness. Thus a memory is just as erratic as our sentiments. We think we remember a specific event and we think we can describe it in detail, but



Title page of the manuscript of *A la recherche du temps perdu* by Marcel Proust

often we just recall the feeling that we stored after the event. We do not only store our memories in our brain but we also colourize our memories with fragrances, tastes, feelings, sounds and images. Marcel Proust, the French writer, described this in the beginning of the last century in his book *A la recherche du temps perdu* – In search of lost times. Memories of his youth in the village of Combray rise up in him when he enjoys a Madeleine (a kind of cake) dipped in flower-tea. The taste of it brings back memories of his youth, his village and his great-aunt Léonie. 'Like a pilot who advances hesitantly

over rough ground and then ascends slowly into the air, I was elevated to the heights of memory.'

Memory

Will we remember this last decade differently because of the introduction of the smartphone? Since its arrival we share our life events via photos, videos and text messages. In such a moment we are not fully 100 % present in the place where we are. Rather, we are busy shaping the future in which we can share it with family, friends, and followers. We are already thinking of the reactions we may receive. In fact, we are

making a memory of something that still has to happen. The present is swallowed up by the future, or at the least coincides with it. Thus past, present and future blend together in this present moment. How will this shape our experiences? According to the German memory-researcher Manfred Spitzer, we will forget more quickly. Because of the use of computer screens, we shall use up our brain capacity more quickly. The more we use computers, the faster our memory will degenerate. Our development stagnates. Spitzer even talks of 'digital dementia.' Dementia is brain malfunction that radically al-

ters our behaviour. Little is left of the person the patient once was. His or her life becomes incomprehensible and illusive. Past and present merge and sometimes it even seems that the future is already here.

Time has become a substance which does not need its own space anymore because it has become indivisible and cannot be set up linearly. There seems to be no night or day anymore, no rhythm in which cause and effect play a role. Thoughts and memories are untraceable and they are in fact not important anymore. But to us, as long as we are led by our thoughts, they are certainly important – very important. Not the thoughts dwelling on things of the past for which you feel regret. Remorse is a rather pointless emotion, as Spinoza already pointed out in the 17th century. We feel remorse about things we did or did not do but you can never turn the clock back by regret. Just as time will not heal all wounds as the saying has it. But there are other entrances in our past, like feelings of nostalgia and melancholy or the results of a past experience. Go back to the places where you could dream, where you could experience your essence. The place

maybe that influenced you in what you are today. Either real places or dreamed, virtual places. Then there may be recognition of an inner reality, an inner certainty.

Trust

A child is born within a microcosmic 'home', his own small world which carries within it a host of memories of past lives. The child grows, fed by the food that it is given, by its parents and by its surroundings. The child learns to think for himself, to make his own decisions; in fact, it learns to live. But from whom does it learn and by what means? The child does not do so all by itself. Learning originates in the things it experiences and in the experiences its microcosm had before and in the experiences of its parents and ancestors and of course in the country it lives in. And so forth and so on.

If it is true that everything exists in relation to us and is furthermore coloured by the present – a dreamed present – then the circle is closed. Then it becomes possible to evaluate what has happened, what happens now and what will happen, consequently finding and using the truth in it. It is a huge confirmation of

what we actually have always known deep down inside. It is knowledge from inside as well as an immense trust surpassing all outside knowledge. If and when we may truly be free is determined by how we live, what guidance we follow, who we want to be, what we want to do. Whatever experience we gain, in this trust we may travel on through a life that every person must shape for himself or herself.

For even if we cannot choose every detail in our life it is certainly up to us to choose what we do with it. Each human determines for himself how he will remember his experiences and how he lets them influence him. Everyone sees the truth differently or sees a different part of it. Only together may we form the whole, like laying a jigsaw puzzle. Maybe that is the road to take in humanity's search to solve the riddle of the universe and to find the answers to all the questions we have in this respect: why, whereto, wherefrom? It all starts with the yearning of our consciousness to find unity and true knowledge. Then our thinking will no longer be imprisoned in our memories but will find an ever-current present and a clear perspective of our life. ★



Paradox

A paradox may be defined as an ‘apparent contradiction’. Apparent? In that case there must be a unity in it, too, supposedly on another level. A good example is the paradoxical statement in the Tao Te Ching: ‘Tao is eternally not-doing and still there is nothing that It does not do. Wu wei for a pupil means ‘doing the not-doing’.

A paradox is not a contradiction. In a contradiction, two opposites hinder each other in their flow. In a paradox, on the other hand, our consciousness is offered a possibility to develop and grow. As such a paradox is more like a question, an assignment, a koan.

The word paradox has its origin in the Greek words ‘para’ (against) and ‘doxa’ (expectation). It is therefore something that goes against our expectations. In other words, it is a truth that wants to draw our attention to it by presenting its back to us. Thus, in a paradox is hidden a chance to learn something, for it is often our expectations (and convictions) that hinder us in our progress. The formula for happiness may therefore be given as $H=R-E$. Happiness = Reality – our Expectations.

The formula for happiness may therefore be given as $H=R-E$. Happiness = Reality – our Expectations

A paradox may be a contradiction in a worldly sense but when we observe it more closely it will reveal an underlying potential for spiritual growth. In order to reach this level we must first move beyond our own personal paradoxes. Life informs us via a paradox: ‘Here is an assignment for you – here is work for you to do’. Like this one: our thinking is necessary to understand spiritual teachings, but at the same time it is a hindrance because it gives us no peace as it is such an autonomous mechanism.

Or: something within us wants us to hold on to what we have but Another wants us to let go.

Or even: I have thoughts but I am not my thoughts – so what am I?

The Buddha taught an impressive paradox with: ‘Stop wanting to change and give yourselves up to That which never changes and by That you will be changed.’

But how do I go on from here? How do I read this riddle? How to arrange the pieces of this jigsaw puzzle?

A paradox is all about a pair of opposites that are at the same time a unity on another level.

The lemniscate is a good pictorial example of this: a horizontal or vertical figure eight in which the opposite fields meet at the crossing point in the middle. It is Yin and Yang in an eternal exchange of energy. It is the dualistic continuous energy of action-reaction and this, as the Latin has it: ‘ad infinitum ad ultra’ which may be translated in two ways: ‘an eternal continuation’ or ‘on the way to eternity’. Another paradox.

The question must now be: ‘How can I use the paradoxes in my life to further inner growth? The first step is to maintain a certain distance and to observe. Keep observing from the vantage point of your consciousness with the question in mind: ‘Which paradoxes regularly crop up in my life? And which question does Life put to me through them?’ The answer will certainly not be about a worldly unity for in that case the thesis would immediately call up an antithesis. No, the direction of the answer will point us to a transformation-through-unity. A transformation to a higher step in consciousness that will direct us to the crossing point of the lemniscate, where movement ceases, where there is peace and quiet. It is this peace that is the prerequisite for our conscious contemplation. Contemplation gives insight and insight is the first step through the open gate of the spiritual Middle Path. It is the path from becoming conscious to being conscious to being Consciousness.

The essence of the possibilities hidden in a paradox may be best expressed by the words of Albert Einstein: ‘We cannot solve the riddles in our life within the space where they originated – we need another Space in which to do that.’ (Einstein) ☼



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